"A YOUNG GIRL'S PERIL," A THRILLING STORY IN NEXT WEEK'S LEDGER

THE CHICAGO LEDGER

VOL. XXXV. NO. 28. CHICAGO, ILL., SATURDAY, JULY 13, 1907. SINGLE COPIES 5 CENTS.

THE EARL'S LOVE; A CANADIAN IDYL

By Granville Osborne

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CHAPTER I.

They called her "Snowflake" in the little township of Cascade City, because of the marvelous whiteness of her skin, and because she was found in a drift one terrible winter when Canada was more snow and ice-bound than usual. She was clinging to the stiff and frozen body of a man she called "daddy" when they picked her out, but there was nothing in the way of papers or letters to identify him, or even a mark on his linen to tell his name, so the orphan child became the charge and property of a mixed set of men who were seeking a living in the heart of England's vast dominion north of America, and who looked upon her as a special gift sent down to them from Heaven.

It was a strange upbringing for a girl. She was placed in the care of a middle-aged woman named Mrs. Warren, whose husband had died only a few months before, and left her with little enough to live on; but her education was strictly conducted under the personal supervision of her so-called guardians, who all were eager to impart the best of their knowledge to her and prevent the slightest harm or evil from crossing her path.

Melancholy Jim was her head master. ery one had a nickname in Cascade City, did away with the trouble of explaining ncestry and placing precedence, and no ne knew whether the various adjectives nd appellations covered a soiled name or hid one of the oldest in the peerage of England.

Melancholy Jim had taken a Double First at Oxford and then fallen a victim to intemperance, so after failing first in one pursuit and then in another, this highly-gifted man had drifted out to the ranches of Canada, where the only result of his university honors was found in the teaching of his tiny girl and the consequent terrible regret which consumed him when he contrasted his former with his present life.

Sunny Hal was the professor of languages. He had spent the early part of his youth striving to make an artistic living in the Quartier Latin, and could speak French like a native, so Snowflake learned various tongues under his tuition, until she could chatter as glibly in them as he could himself.

Globe-Trotting John was the teacher in geography. He had traveled far in search of health, until he finally settled on Canada as the most suitable climate and the freest existence, and he and the little girl would often pore over maps by the hour together while he told her his personal tales of the great world.

Secret Cnarles, so called because no one knew anything about his previous history, was the only one who took no part in her lessons, so he claimed the play hours as a matter of right, and taught her to ride and drive, and to shoot and to dance with a skill which was nearly as great as his own.

Snowflake was an elfin-looking child when she was first discovered in the drift, so every one was somewhat astonished when, as the years went on she began to develop signs of unusual beauty. There was something in her eyes beside—a color as clear and as blue as the summer sea, and something in the whole expression which went deeper than the ordinary aims and objects of a girl's life. When she reached the age of seventeen she was so strikingly lovely that the youth of Cascade City universally pronounced her the belle of the township, and vied with each other for her smiles and favors.

Snowflake herself paid little heed to them. She was too wrapped up in the guardians of her youth to give any serious attention to boys' vapid compliments or lovesick glances; but these same guardians saw the tendency of things with uneasy eyes, and began to realize that Snowflake was growing up indeed.

"If we are not careful," said Melancholy Jim, "we shall wake up one day and find that the child is engaged to be married, and that wouldn't do at all. The youth of Cascade City is all very well in its place, but Snowflake must do better than that."

Secret Charles, to whom the remark was addressed, threw away a half-smoked cigarette with an impatient movement. He was not so extravagant as a rule, but for the time being Jim's words had deadened him to other things.

"Pah!" he said, "she is but a baby yet. Why open her eyes to the trouble and responsibilities of love and marriage?"

"I've no desire to do so, certainly," replied his friend, with a grim look, "but there are plenty of others to do it for me. Young Carstairs of Tren Farm had the audacity to ask her to marry him, yesterday."

Secret Charles smiled. The news did not seem to disturb him very greatly.

"I am sure that Snowflake showed him his place." he said.

"Oh, I dare say that! She's got her head on her shoulders without a doubt but supposing the time should come when—when she might lose that head?"

Charles took a second cigarette out of a well-worn leather case. Time had been when his smoke had always been laid in gold or silver, but this time had been put away with the rest of the halcyon days, when the secret man had had his chance in life and lost it.

"Don't you think," he said slowly, "that—that you are somewhat premature? These sort of affairs generally cast their shadows before them, and, so far, Snowflake has shown no signs of anything of the kind."

"Perhaps not, but one never knows. To be quite honest, I am rather perturbed about the whole subject. Have you,' leaning a little nearer and lowering his voice to a whisper—"have you by any chance noticed anything different—anything out of the way with Sunny Hal just lately?"

The other stopped in the act of striking a match.

"No," he replied with sudden seriousness. "Have you?"

"Well, yes I should say I have. Hal does not merit his nickname now, by any means. He's so quiet and so subdued, and sometimes sits in silence by the hour together."

Charles got up from his seat and went and stood in the window, which showed a far expanse of snow-covered land, and the dazzling peaks of the Rocky Mountains beyond.

"And what does his altered manner point to?" he asked.

"Ha! Is it necessary for me to put it into words?' blurted out Jim, with a certain relief at sharing his knowledge with some one else. "Have you been blind that you have not seen, or deaf that you have not heard? Or have you been so wrapped up with your own concerns that you have not noticed that Sunny Hal is head over ears in love with our dainty Snowflake?"

The trouble was out at last, and Jim drew a long, deep breath. Charles, on the contrary, turned slowly, round from the window and stared at him with startled eyes and parted lips.

"Do you honestly think that?" he asked at last in a stiff, strained voice.

Jim grunted gruffly.

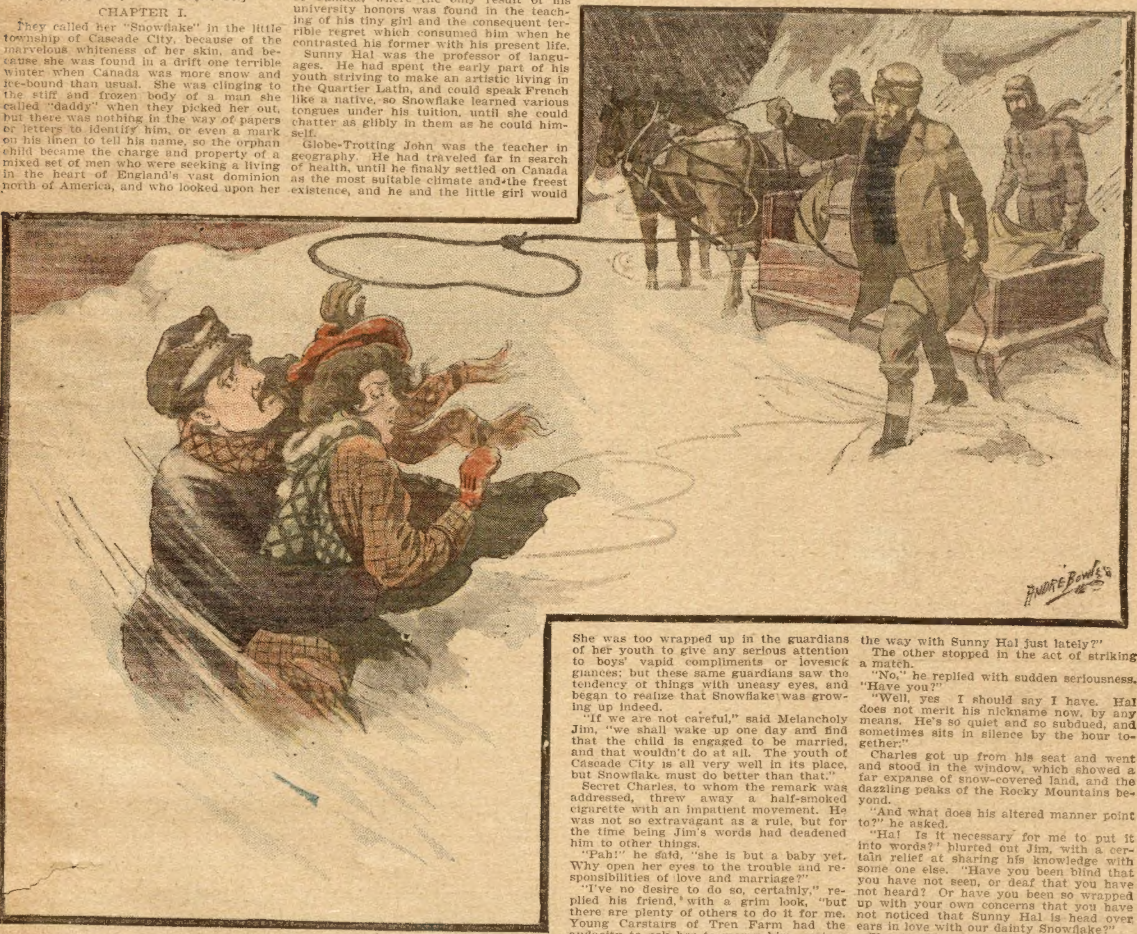
"Great Heaven!" he cried. "I do indeed, and it's a wonder to me that other people do not think likewise. The matter has been apparent enough for any one to see for the last four weeks."

Charles turned the unlighted cigarette round and round in his fingers.

"And—and Snowflake?' he asked slowly. "What of her?"

"Ah! that is more than I can tell you. We four men have brought the child up between us, and loved her as if she were indeed our own, but I don't think one of us could guess what was passing in that lovely head or determine what her feelings were without her knowledge."

Charles moved round to the window again, unconsciously crushing the cigarette between his long, brown fingers. How was it he had not discovered this state of af-



fairs for himself? How was it that his eyes had been shut to what was undoubtedly an open secret to other people? Had he indeed been so absorbed and wrapped up in his own concerns that he had been blind and deaf to others, and never guessed or noticed that some one else was on the same trail as himself?

"I am glad you told me," he said at last, in an odd voice.

"I will keep a lookout and see for myself There will be ample opportunity of judging tonight at the St. Valentine's ball."

He turned towards the door as he spoke, and Jim watched him with satisfied eyes. He was so tall and strong, and so gravely steady, that he felt relieved to have shifted his burden onto such great square shoulders, for, however fond Jim might be of his old companion, he knew quite well that Sunny Hal was too easy-going and too thriftless to make a good husband for their idolized child.

"Where are you going now?" he asked.

Charles stroked his clean-shaven chin. The other men had given free rein to their beards in the unconventional life, and were well content if their garments were firm and strong enough to cover them in decency, but the secret man was always neat and well groomed on every occasion, and his clothes hung as easily on his tall and well-built figure as if they had come straight out from the hands of a Bond street tailor.

"Snowflake and I are going out for a ride," he said.

Jim shaded his eyes and looked through the heavy sky.

"Have a care," he called, "and don't go too far. There is snow in the air, and you don't want to be caught in a drift. If I am not very much mistaken, Cascade City will be storm-bound in another four-and-twenty hours."

Charles shrugged his shoulders.

"You always were a pessimist, Jim," he said casually. "Time ought to have taught you that it is never any good to take a cab and meet misfortune. It comes soon enough without that."

Jim watched the tall figure with its clean length of limb and its gaitered neatness, stride out into the open and disappear in the direction of the tiny cottage where Mrs. Warren lived with her charge.

"He's an odd, reserved creature," he said to himself. "We've lived together nearly twelve years now, yet I know no more about him than if he had arrived yesterday. It's a strange thing a man of his abilities being able to settle down contentedly to a life like this. One is forced to wonder sometimes at the why and wherefore."

But Jim's reflections mattered little enough to the object thereof. Whatever his past might have held, there was nothing but pleasant anticipation in his face as he walked up to Mrs. Warren's cottage and found Snowflake looking out for him from the window.

"Have I kept you waiting?" he asked, with one of his rare smiles, as she tripped out to meet him. "The horses are there already, I see, so we may as well be off before the sun goes in for good."

"Nanny says," she replied, using her own pet name for the old woman who had tended her so faithfully all her years, "that we are not to be out too long, for she doesn't want me to be tired for the ball tonight."

"Ah, the ball!" he repeated, as he swung her lightly up into the saddle, and held out the reins. "I had forgotten it for the moment. You will give me more than half the evening in dances, won't you?"

She looked down at him with a whimsical smile.

"Sunny Hal has just been round to ask me the same thing."

His face changed. In the light of Jim's recent confidence Sunny Hal's sayings and doings had suddenly become of graver importance.

"And, of course, you told him it was impossible," he said, with a touch of the masterful manner which gave one the impression that once long ago he had been accustomed to rule instead of serve.

She shook her head vaguely.

"I didn't tell him anything," she replied, "except that it was too soon to settle up the evening in such a way."

"That is well, as, of course, the giant share of your dances will be mine. I claim them as a matter of right."

"Why?"

He looked a little astonished at the question, as they rode off into the less frequented parts, and still more so when he caught sight of her tip-tilted chin and air of hurt dignity.

"Why?" he repeated somewhat strangely. "Well, if you do not know why without my telling you, I think it might be just as well that Sunny Hal should have as many as he wants."

Her head moved a little restlessly under his steady gaze.

"Perhaps you claim them as a matter of right because—because you taught me to dance?" she said.

He did not answer. He only brought his teeth down on his under lip, and his cane came down smartly on his pony's ears, and the next moment their two mounts had broken into a quick gallop and were flying over the white, hard land.

It was not until they had left Cascade City far behind them that they drew rein and subsided into a quick walk, and then the girl took advantage of the rest to give a cautious glance at the man's face.

It was still the same. His mouth was set in stiff, stern lines, and his eyes were fastened on the majestic ranges and snow-crowned peaks which stood like sentinels around their city.

Snowflake had never seen him like that before, and the face chilled her.

"Oh," she said, with a sudden impulsive manner that was part of her charm, "I will give you half my program, not because you taught me to dance, but because—I wish—like to!"

Her words acted like magic and his frowns vanished like snow before the sun.

"Heaven bless you for those words," he said in a low, serious tone.

And then, with a shy droop of her eyelids, she touched up the pony again and turned her face towards home.

CHAPTER II.

St. Valentine's ball was at its height, and presented a gay scene. It did not much resemble the same kind of thing in England, for instead of the stately halls in which such affairs usually take place, it was held in a big barn made of logs, which were draped with Turkey red and decorated with the dark green foliage of the spruce tree, while the attire of the men varied from black Sunday coats to the soft leather garments often worn by Canadian ranchmen, and the ladies were content for the most part with a dark skirt and a light blouse, cut high or low, to the taste of the wearer.

Snowflake alone was dressed in white from head to foot. Her clothes were paid for, like her board and lodging, by her four guardians, and put together by her own clever fingers, but in the choice of stuffs and color Secret Charles was always at hand to put in his word and to add an extra coin or two if it were a matter of good or indifferent texture, or if it were for a special object like St. Valentine's ball.

So it was that the girl nearly always stood out among her fellow maidens the fairest of them all. Secret Charles liked her best in white, and when he came back from one of his mysterious visits to Winnipeg, which he was accustomed to take about four times in the year, with a roll of the softest, daintiest silk at the top of his leather portmanteau, she could hardly speak her gratitude for her delighted astonishment.

He was well rewarded for his generosity when he saw her in it, for it showed off her golden hair, and seemed all a part of the matchless skin which appeared above the slightly low-cut bodice, and when the youths of Cascade City as well as her guardians surrounded her in the ballroom and clamored for dances, he told himself he was wise to have secured his own beforehand.

"The belle of the ball without a doubt," said Jim, with a well pleased smile as he watched her. "It makes me quite sorry that she shouldn't have a wider scope for her beauty. She'd queen it anywhere, either in a humble cottage or a splendid palace."

Globe-Trotting John sighed a little for his lost youth. Both he and Jim were considerably older than her other guardians, but they had not forgotten the days when love had held its part in their misspent lives.

"Yes," he said with a rather lugubrious air, "Snowflake would take the palm for beauty in any assembly. There'll be fine complications concerning her shortly in our erstwhile peaceful camp."

Jim knit his brows.

"You are referring to our comrade Hal, I suppose?"

"For one, yes, and Charles for the other! They are both as hopelessly in love with her as it is possible to be, only they don't quite show it in the same way."

"Charles!" Jim repeated the name with an astonished stare. "You can't mean that, surely?"

"But, indeed, I do"—with a grim smile which lighted up his rugged features, "It's an even chance as far as ordinary lookers-on are concerned, but those who are in the secret know Charles is undoubtedly first favorite. That is why I prophesy complications in the future, for if Snowflake marries Charles, poor Hal can't very well stay on at the ranch."

Jim looked back at him in silence with his eyes apart, for he was thinking of his conversation with the "favorite" that afternoon. In the light of present revelations Charles' attitude and somewhat upset manner were easier to understand.

"It never struck me!" he gasped out at last. "It never entered my head for a moment." And his eyes wandered towards the couple who were even then whirling round the room in their graceful, harmonious movement, with an ease which drew all eyes their way in unanimous admiration.

"He's a fine specimen of manhood," said John meditatively, "as far as outward things go, but we don't know a thing about his antecedents or bygone history. He will have to drop the sobriquet before he marries Snowflake."

Jim nodded silently. He was more upset by the news than he cared to show, for he recognized that their happy, peaceful life under the shadow of the mountains was a thing of the past.

But Jim's reflections mattered little enough just then to the two principally concerned. With the inspiring strains of the fiddlers drifting round them, and the exhilarating motion of the dance to fill their heads and hearts with gladness, neither Charles nor Snowflake cared for other things besides. It was not until the last note trailed off into silence that they came to a standstill and wandered off down the big room to a smaller one at the far end

Sunny Hal met them close by the door. "Don't forget the next is mine," he called to Snowflake as she went by.

She shook her head with a laughing smile, which did not find reflection on her partner's face, for Charles was not in the mood to tolerate any attention on the part of a rival or share his favors with any of the other people who had come in from the country roundabout for St. Valentine's ball, and his eyes were very stern as he pushed his way through the crowd of men and maidens towards a tiny alcove at the end of the passage, which very few were aware of excepting himself.

But they were barely free of the throng threading their way to the refreshment room when a stranger suddenly appeared coming in the opposite direction, and stood aside to let them pass. Charles turned his head to give him a courteous acknowledgment, but as he did so a start of recognition flashed over the other's face, and he gave vent to a short laugh of astonishment.

"You here?" he cried in a voice which at once proclaimed him to be an American.

Charles' face changed. To any one watching him intently, it might almost have seemed as if the pleasure in the meeting was by no means mutual.

"Yes," he replied shortly, "I am here for a short time."

"What queer places one does meet in to be sure," went on the other garrulously. "I should never have fixed on Cascade City as a harbor for you."

Charles' eyebrows met in a straight line across his face.

"The Anchor is coming up very shortly," he remarked enigmatically.

"Ah, your ship just put in to get rid of the barnacles round her hull, I suppose?"—with a significant laugh. "I hope she succeeded?"

Charles did not answer. With his lips tightly compressed he gave a nod of dismissal to the evidently unwelcome stranger, and led Snowflake hurriedly away to the alcove beyond.

But before he let the curtain fall behind him he took a swift look backward. The stranger had joined the throng round the refreshment table that time and was fraternizing with Melancholy Jim. A gesture of the former's head in his direction told Charles plainly enough the drift and subject of their conversation.

He bit his lip. For one moment the content in his face changed to a savage anger and a sign of impotent weakness such as it only rarely showed in times of baffled purpose, and then he threw off the expression like a garment and turned and sat down by the girl watching him wonderingly in the alcove behind.

For one moment a great silence reigned, and then Snowflake broke it in a voice of startled entreaty which made his heart leap

"You didn't mean that, really, did you?"

He fixed his eyes on her quivering face. "Mean what?"

"That you were going away—that you were going to weigh anchor in Cascade City."

He drew a long, deep breath of consideration. "Yes, I did mean it!"

Her great blue eyes watched him furtively.

"When?"

He drew another breath, for the one questioning word was spoken in a tone of stricken dismay.

"Tomorrow."

"Tomorrow," she repeated, as if the news had struck her and left her powerless. "And for how long?"

"Forever"—stating the fact with that relentless purpose in his voice which, had it been used for better things, would never have landed him an outcast and a wanderer in the wilds of Canada.

"But why this sudden determination—this strange and sudden change of plans?"

Snowflake had mastered her emotion by this time, and was speaking in a voice which showed only hurt feelings, and a sensitive desire to display a callousness as great as his own.

He kept his eyes on her face.

"I am going away to—to be married!"

He was rewarded for his merciless scrutiny, for the news had the effect he desired. Her face turned a sudden white even to the lips, and her breath came in little gasps of stricken despair.

"To be married," she repeated, with a wild effort after self-control which did her infinite credit. "And to whom?"

He placed his elbow on his knee, and his head on his hand.

"To you, I hope."

"To me?"

Anything more than mere repetition seemed beyond her.

He leaned a little nearer. She could feel his hot breath against her face.

"Will you come, Snowflake?" he whispered. "Will you come away with me to other lands? Just you and I together, sweetheart?"

The color came slowly back, tinging the white of her cheeks with a lovely rose flush which darkened the pathos of her great eyes. She could hardly believe the evidence of her own ears—could hardly grasp this wonderful, glorious happiness he was holding towards her, after the bitter blight she had suffered the moment before.

"Do you mean it?" she asked incredulously. "Do you really mean it?"

"As surely as I stand here," putting out his hands and taking hers in his great, strong clasp. "As surely as I think and dream of no one else but you—as surely as I live for you—as surely as I hold you in my hungry arms this moment, and turn earth into Heaven by our first kiss."

He drew her close and closer yet, and then he bent his head. It was her first experience of such a thing—the first time a lover's lips had touched her own, and in a strange new shyness she turned her head on his shoulders and covered its glowing beauty against his sleeve.

"You will come with me tomorrow," he went on. "We can ride away in the early hours of the morning before the others are astir."

She looked up at him wonderingly.

"But why?" she asked. "Why cannot we be married like other people in the township?"

His laugh was somewhat short and awkward. "For many reasons," he explained, "but first and foremost because the other three would never countenance such a thing for a moment. They all want you themselves—Sunny Hal especially, and if they once got wind of this they would lock you up and never let us meet again. Our only chance lies in secrecy. Don't you love me enough, Snowflake, to come away and face the unknown world for my sake?"

She drew her hands together with a doubtful movement.

"I—I would rather marry you openly," she said with a falter in her voice.

He gave a sigh, the worth of which he had gauged to its fullest extent.

"The time has come for me to move on," he said, "and I must start tomorrow. Will you have me go alone?"

She put her hands across her eyes, considering things with a quickness beyond her age. She saw the years stretching before her in Cascade City without Charles. She saw the days pass by in endless, dull monotony without the man who had been the playmate of her youth, who ever since she could remember had been the moving spirit of her life, and her heart sank at the thought.

"Oh!" she cried, looking up into his fac with tear-filled eyes. "I can't—I just can let you go alone!"

His arms went round her again, po sessively, persuasively.

"Then you will come with me tomorrow morning? You will be ready when I call at the cottage at five o'clock?"

Her eyes fell again until her lashes quivered on her cheeks.

"Yes," she whispered, "I will."

CHAPTER III.

Religion had held no part in Snowflake's education. A professor of divinity had not been included among her masters, and though she knew something of the world's redemption from old Mrs. Warren, she had never been taught to apply it to her own life.

So it was that when she got up, tired and weary, in the early hours of the morning after the ball, to ride away forever with Secret Charles, it was more the sense of ingratitude towards her guardians, rather than a knowledge of right and wrong, which brought a heavy feeling of depression to her young heart.

It was very dark and very cold as she stole out of the cottage. For the moment she was almost inclined to repent her decision and turn back, but the sight Charles waiting for her in the shadow some spruce trees just beyond robbed vacillating will of its last remnant strength, and took her to meet him wit out further demur.

His eyes flashed as he saw her coming "We must hurry," he said, putting her up on her horse without even giving himsel time for a greeting. "For the sky shows snow and we do not want to get caught in a drift. Now we are off"—as he swun

BACKACHE AND DESPONDENCY

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They do not realize that the back is the main-spring of woman's organism and quickly indicates by aching a diseased condition of the feminine organs or kidneys, and that aches and pains will continue until the cause is removed.

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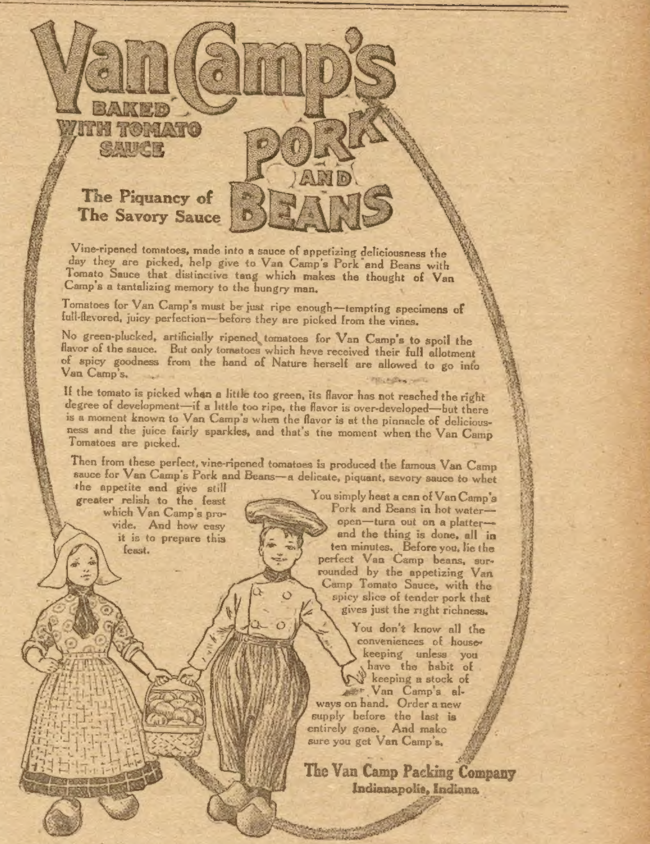
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You don't know all the conveniences of housekeeping unless you have the habit of keeping a stock of Van Camp's always on hand. Order a new supply before the last is entirely gone. And make sure you get Van Camp's.

The Van Camp Packing Company
Indianapolis, Indiana

himself up to his own saddle, and they broke into a gentle canter—"Cascade City is behind us, and the world before."

She kept her eyes on the distant snow-clad peaks. She felt she could not look back on the place which had sheltered her so many years, or the people who had helped to save her from death and starvation.

"Oh, you will let me come back again, won't you?" she pleaded brokenly. "They have been so good to me. I cannot bear to think that they should believe me heartless and ungrateful."

He threw his head back and let the wind play against his face, the cold, dry wind which whispered of snow and storm, and yet seemed to give him a sense of freedom.

"We will go back some day," he said, with a touch of softness in his face and voice.

She blinked back the tears from her eyes. "I left a little letter for Melancholy Jim," she said, as they drew nearer to the mighty mountain ridges which looked doubly majestic in contrast to the low-lying ranching regions through which they had come. "I thought it only right to explain."

He turned sharply on his saddle.

"What did you say?" he asked.

"I just told him what I was going to do—that I was coming away to marry you."

He gave her back no answer. He just brought his teeth down quickly on his under lip and gave his horse a smart flick across his ears.

The next moment they were covering the ground at a lightning pace, and in a quarter of an hour the last faint glimpses of Cascade City were out of sight.

Towards noon they reached the foothills of the Rockies, where they changed horses and refreshed themselves at a small town on the river banks, but Charles would not allow more than a ten minutes' wait in all.

"I am afraid of the snow," he explained, when the girl wondered somewhat at his excessive hurry. "It is very important that we should reach the railway before the storm comes on. After that it does not matter, for we shall be together—always together, just you and I."

She smiled back, for her trust in him was infinite, and she uttered no word of complaint when the heavy clouds opened their blackness and the threatened snow began at last.

Charles raised his face to the sky, for they were nearing the mountain pass now, and he knew their danger. One false step on those ice-covered glacier-looking rocks—one mistaken yard out of the beaten track and both he and she might be landed in the unknown oblivion of eternity.

He drew his horse a little nearer to hers. "Keep close to me," he said, for the snow was blinding now, and fell like a white shroud between them. "Don't let me out of sight for a moment. Here, catch hold of my hand and hold it fast. With a little luck we shall be through the pass in an hour."

But it so happened that, instead of possessing a small supply of that commodity, they were quite devoid of it, for even as he spoke Snowflake's horse gave a sudden sharp stumble and the next moment was plunging up to its girths in a soft, sinking mass of glittering whiteness.

"Merciful Heavens!" cried the man as his own mount followed suit immediately after, "but we are in a drift. Let go of the reins, Snowflake and get free of the mare. Her weight will only drag you further in."

She did as she was told, for he had not taught her to be a horsewoman for nothing, but even then she was left grappling with a surface which gave way at every footfall, and finally landed her, panting and breathless, in a deeper drift than before.

She uttered a faint cry.

"Help me!" she called piteously, "for my hands are numb and lifeless and I cannot see you. Charles, Charles! Don't leave me here alone. It is so cold and dark, and I am tired and frightened!"

He kicked his feet out of his stirrups, and then himself off his own struggling steed; then, with slow and cautious movements, he crept on his hands and knees to where she lay.

He put his arms around her and drew her to him with a fierce love and longing.

"Keep up your heart, my darling," he whispered, "and hold on to me. We must trust to our own feet now, and leave the poor horses to look after themselves."

It was easier said than done, for they were in one of the worst parts of the drift, and the girl's strength was all but spent. It was useless for Charles to whisper cheering words and useless for him to dig away the snow with his hands, for the pathway he made only seemed to lead them to deeper trouble and bring the wet whiteness beyond their waists.

And meanwhile the snow fell unceasingly, until their heads and shoulders were covered with a stiff, white pall, and from the distance came the soul-piercing sound of splitting ice, as the smaller glaciers moved and broke in the blizzard, and the earth seemed rent in twain with a roar like thunder.

The girl clung to him.

"Save me! Save me!" she cried hoarsely. "I am too young to die—I am too afraid!"

Charles set his teeth together and strained his eyes and ears through the blackness. What was that he heard? What was that faint tingling sound which drifted towards them on the frozen blast?

"Courage, my darling!" he whispered brokenly, "I can catch strange echoes in the distance. Let us listen again!"

They kept quite quiet. The weird unearthly deadness of snow lay all around them. Every sound was audible—every echo doubly shrill, and as they waited there in half-frozen suspense and agony, the faint clang of sleigh-bells broke upon their strained ears.

Charles gripped the girl still closer, striving to put the warmth of his own body into hers. She could not see the look of baffled purpose which blazed like fire in his angry eyes.

"There is help near at hand," he cried. "Raise your voice and let us call with all our might. Some one may hear us and come to save us."

She did as she was told. There was little effort left in her, but life is dear to youth, and gave her added strength, and so a joint and ringing shout for help went out into the darkness.

They waited breathlessly for the result. The sleigh-bells were coming nearer now. They could hear the echo of them in the mountain pass and the clip, clap, clop of the roughed hoofs on the beaten track, and then the flash of lanterns blazed upon the snow around and made it glisten with a thousand rays.

Charles raised a second shout.

"Have you any ropes?" he called pantingly. "Don't attempt to leave the track, for the drift is twelve feet deep in parts, and as soft as butter."

There was a jumble of men's heads and arms in the lantern light, and then a rope was thrown with the straight and unerring aim of a Canadian ranchman.

It landed close to where they stood, and Charles put out his numbed hand, but before he grasped it he looked at the three men whose dark figures showed fitfully in the shifting light, and recognized their faces with a dull sense of despair.

Melancholy Jim, Globe-Trotting John and Sunny Hal had come in their combined strength to fetch back the runaways.

Charles' fingers closed round the rope, but before he passed the noose around his own waist he bent his head and kissed the white face lying on his breast.

"It is for the last time," he half muttered to himself, and then he took hold of the rope with a fierceness which seemed as if it were ready for anything to wreak its passion upon, and the next moment he had given the signal to pull.

It was hard work. He had to fight the ground inch by inch, with one arm round the fainting, half-frozen girl and the other scraping away the snow as his cut and bleeding hands helped to clear the pathway. But they reached the solid rocky bank at last, and dropped, spent and almost lifeless, at their rescuers' feet.

Snowflake was put into the sleigh by Jim, and wrapped round in a thick blanket. Sunny Hal pulled out his flask and poured a dose of spirits down her frozen throat, while John jumped onto the box-seat and turned the stamping horses back onto the homeward road, and Charles sat in lonely banishment behind.

When they reached the little township on the river they drew up at the small house which did duty for an inn, and was glorified by the name of the Falls Hotel. There were no other visitors but themselves, so they carried the girl into the bare and empty coffee rooms and sat her down in front of the wood fire.

Charles followed them in with slow and heavy footsteps, for he knew a time was coming more terrible and more deadly than that in the snowdrift, and when he saw his three comrades stand round the girl with attitudes of protection and bitter, stern faces, such as tney had never worn before, he realized that his hour of judgment had arrived.

Melancholy Jim took the lead and, in spite of his righteous anger, his voice faltered as he opened the proceedings.

"Secret Charles," he began, with flickering eyes, "you have well earned your name. For twelve years you have dwelt among us in a false position, telling us nothing of your circumstances or your earlier life and years. At the end of it you abuse our trust and friendship by stealing away with the child we have loved and brought up as our own, knowing full well that you were committing an act so dastardly that you dare not do it in the open, or risk the censure of your fellow-men."

Charles stood before them in terrible stillness, looking first at the stern faces of his accusers, and then at the white one of the girl watching him with wide eyes and waiting for a defense which did not come. It was she who at last broke the silence.

"What has he done?" she cried with quivering lips. "We only ran away to get married. It was as much my fault as his for going with him; but—but"—a lovely flush stealing into her pale cheeks—"I loved him so, and I—I could not let him go alone."

The other men moved restlessly. John put his hand over his eyes and Hal turned towards the window. Only Jim mastered his softer feelings and let the iron enter his soul.

"Ask the question of him," he cried mirthlessly. "Let him tell you in his own words where the wrong lies. It shall be his punishment, and God help him, I say, in the telling of it."

He waited for an answer, but none came. Tall and straight and silent, Secret Charles stood before his accusers and not so much as the muscle of an eyelid moved. Whatever he felt on the subject he kept in the bitter, anguished recesses of his own heart.

Melancholy Jim lost his patience, while even the other two men showed outward and visible signs of resentful anger.

"Speak," cried the former, clutching at the deal table before him, while his usually apathetic eyes showed signs of fire. "Speak up and tell the truth, as it was told to me last night by a man who knew you in your former years. Tell the child whose love you have so dastardly tried to win and abuse, the reason why a marriage with her was impossible."

His lips moved, but still there came no sound from them. It was not until the others, with one accord, moved forward and clenched their hands that Secret Charles spoke again.

"I have no defense," he said lifelessly, "except that I loved her. My love was so great that I sinned in its very strength and mastery."

Jim brought his hand down on the table with a mighty thud, but Snowflake started up from her seat and silenced him with a gesture of her white hand.

"Tell me the truth," she said, moving a step forward and standing before him in all her wondrous beauty and perfection. "You asked me to marry you and now they tell me that such a thing is impossble. Is it they who are wrong or you?"

His eyes fell before her straight, compelling glance. He could stand before his other accusers, but this one took the last remnant of strength out of his fighting powers.

"It is I who have done wrong," he said in a shamed whisper, "not they. Be content to leave it at that and ask no further."

But she threw up her head with a queenly gesture.

"I am no child now," she said. "You yourself have turned me into a woman. You yourself took me to the place where brook and river meet. Tell me with your own lips why you could not marry me—why you persuaded me to leave my home and friends, and all the time were lying to my very face?"

He whitened under the bronze with which wind and snow had darkened his skin. It was fully a moment before he spoke again, and when he opened his lips Secret Charles had tasted of a bitterness which was greater than death.

"I could not marry you," he said, in a low voice, which penetrated to the furthermost corners of the room, "because—because I am already married and—my wife is still alive."

The girl looked at him steadily. For the moment her love was mastered and swallowed up by a mighty contempt.

"And yet you took me away with you," she cried with ringing scorn. "You persuaded me with false words and falser looks, and you call that love which worked your own undoing—and mine?"

The other men closed round her. In Hal's face was a look which spoke of many things.

"What shall we do with him?" he asked. "How shall we punish him? The verdict lies in your hands!"

The girl put her hand on his arm. She knew the methods of the wild, untrammelled men of the West, and trembled for the passionate anger which was rending them body and soul. Moreover, she had loved Secret Charles with all the strength of her young heart.

"Let him go!" she commanded. "Let him go with his own thoughts and his own sin to bear him company. It is my wish."

They made a movement as if they would disregard it. On each of the weather-beaten faces lay a look of deadly vengeance such as filled her with an awful dread.

She placed herself in front of them and waved them back.

"For my sake," she pleaded brokenly. "For my sake!"

Their hands unclenched and they fell back a step, then she turned towards Charles a second time.

"Go!" she commanded, pointing towards the door. "Go at once, while you have the chance."

He looked at her for one short moment and then did as he was told. Without a word he turned and left the room and quietly closed the door behind him.

Snowflake listened to the echo of his footsteps. Tramp, tramp, they went on th wooden boards of the passage. Tramp tramp, out of the inn door into the cold and utter silence of the night.

She gave a glance through the uncurtained window. The snow had ceased falling then, and a brilliant moon was full in the heavens, lighting up the grandeur of the snow-capped mountains and outlining the dark and lonely figure of an outcast man.

She saw him pass into the shadows and disappear, and then she uttered a fierce and bitter cry and swayed against the table. The three men hurried forward, but they were too late, for before they could stretch out an arm to save her Snowflake had dropped at their feet in merciful oblivion.

This thrilling and remarkable story will be continued in next week's Ledger, giving the reader chapters filled with dramatic situations of the very highest interest. To every one subscribing for the Ledger we are now sending, entirely without cost, one of our splendid stereoscopes, also any six of our selected and valuable patterns, as announced on pages thirteen and fifteen. Look at our advertisement of these splendid premiums and see if you do not wish them.

Items of Interest.

The rapid growth of the finger-nails indicates good health.

The champion fasters of the world are the Jains of India, a heterodox sect of Hindus. They abstain from food at times as a rule of their religion, and these fasts last sometimes from thirty to fifty days.

The phonograph is now used to teach young parrots to swear. In South American ports a parrot costs about twelve cents; after three months' tuition, when they can utter a few choice oaths, they readily bring from four to ten dollars each.

An ingenious inventor in Stockholm, Sweden, named Ekerburg, has patented a machine which will receive fresh herrings from the net, sort them into four sizes, scrape off the scales, decapitate, split, clean and wash them at the rate of twenty thousand fish an hour.

When the Cuban rebellion started, the Government seized nearly all the private automobiles in and around Havana, and used them to carry supplies to threatened points. In a few days all the roads were liberally sprinkled with tacks and broken glass, to spoil the tires.

An enterprising firm in the British metropolis has organized a system of seeing London in six days for $10.50, including a midday meal every day. The patron will have an opportunity to inspect everything, "whether of picturesque or historic interest," in the capital and its suburbs.

The Emperor William is not fond of cats. It is said he induced the Berlin municipality to put a tax on them. Every pussy must now wear her medal as a sign that the tax has been paid on her behalf. If she appears on the street without a medal, she is hurried off to the death chamber, and is soon an extinct cat.

Sunny Slope, California, enjoys the distinction of having the largest vineyard in the world. It is situated amidst the most beautiful scenery of that favored section, two miles from San Gabriel. Of a total of 1,900 acres, 735 are devoted to gravevines, the remainder being distributed among orange, lemon and olive trees.

THE SECRET MARRIAGE;

Or

THE FATE OF A BIGAMIST.

By CONSTANCE BEATRICE WILLARD, author of "Magnolia Blossoms," "Red Roses and Red Love," "A Traitor to Love," etc.

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Begun in No. 27, July 6. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER V.

"YOU LIE!"

These words filled with such import, however, did not affect either Pansy or Calhoun, for both were too unhappy over the death of the major, for the young Southerner was not ashamed of his love for his father, and to Pansy he had always been so tender and gentle, that there was reverence and respect mingled with her love.

The doctor, though, knew that it would not do for her to stay there, and so drew her away from the old man who, but a moment before had been her guardian and dearest friend, and laying her half-unconscious form in Calhoun's arms said in a low tone:

"Take her, Calhoun; she has no one else to look to but you, and be mighty gentle with her, son, mighty gentle," and Calhoun carrying her in his strong arms up the broad stairs felt that certainly, next to Helen, she was his dearest hope. His lips were quivering, too, for the doctor's calling him 'son' had touched him, now that his father was dead. It was, as he knew, but the expression of the old man's kindly friendship, for in that locality to call a younger person son or daughter, as the case might be, is a compliment, and betokens deep feeling behind it.

"We just need Helen," he whispered to himself, as reaching the door of Pansy's room, he knocked, and her maid appearing, placed the now unconscious girl in her care, and then wearily dragged himself downstairs.

"Calhoun!" he heard the shrill voice of the minister calling, as he was looking about for a servant. He was exhausted with his travels, worn with the emotion he had passed through, and almost starved.

"Yes, sir," he replied respectfully, "but you and the doctor take charge. I am almost broken down."

"I was going to talk with you about a few details and give you this," holding out a paper.

In after days how Calhoun wished he had put all thoughts of self aside, listened to the minister, and prevented the recording of that strange marriage, of which at the time he was utterly unaware. Had he stopped, even a moment, his after life would have been so different, and so would that of poor little Pansy, but very often we fail just through an overconsideration of self.

"Just as you say, my boy," the good old man said gently, and Calhoun smiled slightly, and then put himself in the hands of the man who had looked after him since he was released from the nursery, and soon was sleeping deeply, dreaming of Helen, and longing to go to her.

When Pansy recovered, she insisted upon creeping down to the bedside of what was to her still the major, and until his funeral she barely left the room, except to see that the roses were gathered and the grave filled. She sent word to Calhoun, who, manlike, had utterly forgotten, and he felt glad to be given something to do. From the darkend chamber she issued her orders, so that when the day came, the many who gathered found everything in order, and had to admit that no one could have managed things better. The coffin, made by a local carpenter—for it would have been difficult to secure one large enough, without sending North for it, and there was not time for that—was covered with white satin, and the bier draped with white. Within it the high-bred face could be seen on satin pillows, the dignified body was clothed in the customary full dress suit of frock coat, lavender trousers, high collar, and white clerical-apearing necktie, which Pansy had tied for him so many times. The slender, beautifully cared for hands were folded across his breast, and between the fingers lay one perfect white rose.

There was nothing to disturb the most sensitive in that dignified figure, but much to inspire awe and reverence, and as the old comrade-in-arms and beloved friend, the soldier-minister began the beautiful service of the dead, tears began to flow, and little Pansy, whose nerves had been on a terrible strain for so long, beneath her enshrouding veil, swayed and would have fainted, if it had not been for the protecting arm Calhoun threw about her, as these two sat, the chief mourners. All the people there had learned of the romantic marriage, and thought to themselves how beautiful it was to see the young husband sustaining and comforting his bride in the time of their mutual sorrow. None of them took the trouble to notice that Calhoun's embarce was not a caressing one, but simply a supporting one, such as he would have given any one of his acquaintance who needed it. There was no one who was more sensitive with regard to a public exhibition of love, but his friends never stopped to think, and he rose still higher in their favor when it could be seen, at the end of the service, that he was trying to induce her to remain in the house. When he found that she was determined to see that his father's every wish had been carried out, Calhoun guided her footsteps, almost carrying her. It was a short distance from the house to the private burying ground. The honary pall bearers walked outside the actual ones, negroes, the family servants, in snow white linen, their dark faces streaming with tears. It had been the major's wish that those who served him faithfully during life, perform the last service, which their strength made possible. Among the honary pall bearers were the colonel-minister and the captain-doctor, the others being men of similar rank, warm friends of the dead man, including the former soldier and lawyer, Judge Burton.

Among those who followed was a handsome young fellow, of medium height, with a keen, intelluectual face, from whose high brow the dark hair swept back. Pansy and Calhoun had never known a better friend than Kenneth Rolf, a son of the doctor. As they walked, his dark eyes were fixed upon the drooping figure of the young girl, and such an expression of sorrow rested on his face, that a number spoke of it, and were surprised that he felt the major's death so intensely.

At last the dreary little procession paused by the grave, dug by the hands of the negro who had for sixty-five years been the major's body-servant, and who now, watching his fellow-workers bear the dear dead man to his last resting place, dropped to the ground and burst into a perfect passion of tears, which he could not subdue. All who heard felt the pitifulness ot it, and knew that old Jonah would not long survive his master.

There was no yawning hole into which the coffin had to be dropped, but a wonderful fragrance coming from white roses, stripped of their thorns, waiting to enshroud the man who had loved them so in memory of the great love of his life.

In a voice so broken he could scarcely repeat the words, the old minister sobbed out the remainder of the service, and the coffin was gently set on the graveful of roses, and slowly sunk out of sight. As it disappeared, Pansy broke into a low cry, and Calhoun picking her up, carried her back to the house, and into the little sitting room, away from the scene of the burial ceremony. Laying her on the couch, he took off her heavy veil and mourning bonnet, opened one of the French shades, and hunted up water and smelling salts. So well did he work with her, that in a few moments the sweet eyes opened, and a little hand sought his. Never before had they been so near in affection as then when their first sorrow was upon them. For a few minutes, until she regained perfect possession of her feelings, Pansy rested there in his arms as she would in those of a brother, and he stroked her soft hair, and once kissed the cheek nearest him, usually so rosy, but now white, and all as a brother, for not since he had seen her, even during that honeymoon week, had his thoughts been more with Helen, his idolized wife.

At last Pansy started to raise herself, and he helped her, seating her in a luxurious armchair, and himself taking another.

"Do you feel equal to a little talk, dear?" he asked affectionately, resolving to tell of his marriage, and thus give her the reason for his abrupt departure, for he had decided to catch the evening train for the North. Owing to his father's death, he had deemed it best not to write, or even telegraph Helen. In fact he had explained to her in their hurried talk before he left, that it might be several days before he sent her word, and she had agreed with the singular gentleness which was one of her charms. He had also arranged with her that if anything unpleasant did happen at the hotel, that she should go to a private house in New York City, the mistress of which was a friend of hers. In addition, he felt that he could not endure life without her, so had she interwoven herself in his heart.

As he asked the question, Pansy smiled up at him very gently, replying:

"Certainly. A dreadful burden is lifted, and I am going to bury all gloom with the white roses, and make myself realize how happy the dear major is. Then, too, Cal, dear, I want to talk to you," and her white face flushed crimson.

As they sat there, she leaning back in her chair, he leaning forward, they looked very domestic, and there was no wonder that the minister, the lawyer, the doctor and his son should be much impressed.

"The dear children," the minister said softly, his voice quivering.

Calhoun saw them, and arose, although annoyed, for he wanted to have that talk as soon as possible.

"We have come to get the reading of the will off our minds," Judge Burton said courteously.

"Yes, and to congratulate you, my dears," chimed in the minister, laying a roll of paper in Pansy's lap.

Calhoun's face flushed deeply, and it was with difficulty that he refrained from a sharp retort. To his mind such a speech was in very bad taste. To think of a man of the minister's breeding congratulating them upon their inheritance was almost unbearable.

Pansy had raised her eyes to Kenneth's face, only to meet such an expression as to almost break her heart, and drooping her lids, she struggled to keep back the tears.

It was a strange little party, all playing at cross purposes, and yet each one of them, honorable, and hitherto the best of friends.

"But Madame does not look at the nice little certificate I wrote up for her," the minister said, smiling affectionately at Pansy, who looked at him in astonishment. Kenneth's face grew so dark, that Calhoun, looking at him, could not understand why he appeared capable of murder.

"Yes, my dear, I engrossed it for you, our Pansy, although I have not done that for many a long year, no matter how hard the bride pleaded."

"Bride!" two voices rang out in astonishment and despair.

"What do you mean," Calhoun continued harshly, while Pansy's fingers twisted about the hateful roll, spasmodically.

The old minister drew himself up, saying with such dignity as to compel attention:

"I mean that there is the certificate of the marriage I performed between you Calhoun Fairley, and Pansy Arlington, the night the major died."

With a quick motion, utterly unlike her usual self, Pansy threw the terrible document far out into the rose garden, and flew, not to Calhoun, but Kenneth, whose arms folded about her, in instant protection, as she said decidedly:

"I'm not a bride of any one yet, but when I marry, it will be Kenneth," and the young man, whose face had been so drawn with agony, for he had heard his father's story, now beamed, and he cried, bending his head over the little golden one:

"And by the Eternal it will be soon," while Calhoun looking on, seemed to be in a dream. He was Helen's husband, not Pansy's; he could not marry two women without being a bigamist. He looked at Pansy, nestled in Kenneth's arms, and was happy. How beautifully that settled matters. How blind he had been not to see that they were growing to love each other, before he left home. Bless them! Then he was interrupted by the minister, who thundered:

"Go back to your husband, Pansy Fairley; you are his lawful wife, and know it. Remember that you are joined together by God himself, and nothing but death can free you."

Calhoun gave a great start, his face worked, his eyes flashed, but nothing came from his trembling lips. Kenneth tightened his clasp of the frightened girl, and she kept her face hidden on his shoulder.

At last Calhoun found his voice, and raising his hand as though taking an oath, cried:

"You lie; we were not married!"

And Pansy, her face resolute, raised her own right hand, and repeated:

"You lie."

CHAPTER VI.

"A WITHERED ROSE."

Secluded in her room at the Highland Spring Hotel was one whom the world still called Helen Croton, but who knew herself, and had full proof of it, to be Helen Fairley, bride of Calhoun Fairley. Her beautiful face was filled with her deep love, and she whispered to herself:

"Once, long ago in some sweet garden's
hush,
A lover gave you, snow-white, to his love,
And lifted to her lips, you saw her blush,
And blushed to watch the damask cheek
above."

Then she gave a little laugh: "Ever hear of any one so joyously, gloriously happy? I cannot help remembering everything he told me. How glad I will be to see that old home in the great plantation, away from the world. Think of it, with its cedars, magnolias and graceful sweeping white birch; the hedges of box, and the roses, nearly all white. I'll never forget when he brought me a great bunch of American beauties, and said that little verse to me. I can remember his very words:

"'Our roses are nearly all white, because my father loves them, but these are more like you, my heart's bloom.'"

The fair face was like a rose with blushes, as she recalled her husband's love making, and realized that she, a penniless companion, subjected to the coldness of society, had become his wife, his honored wife.

"Though, I cannot help wishing," she mused, her chin in her hands, "that we had not been married secretly. Still, I was at fault, for I wanted to let him announce it. Yet, I felt that I wanted to leave here These disagreeable women! Well it will soon be over, and then I will have to try to make his father like us. If I have hurt that little flower of a girl in any way, I deserve such punishment, oh, such as no one ever had. If I won him away from her," and she sighed. "Somehow, though, I do not think I have done her any harm. I believe I'm better fitted for him than she, sweet and lovely as she is. At any rate the deed is done, he is mine through eternity, bless him," and again her glorious young eyes glowed with love, then she started abruptly, and with an exclamation hurried to Mrs. Bly's room, to find that person so disdainfully disagreeable, that she decided to resign that very day and go to her friend's in New York. She had lingered, hoping to get at least a telegram, but was not at all worried about it.

At last Mrs. Bly commanded her to read the Sunday paper, which reached the Springs on Monday, and she seated herself and began, when suddenly her eyes were almost burned by a headline:

"ROMANTIC WEDDING AT DEATH BED
OF MAJOR FAIRLEY; HIS HEIR
MARRIES THE WARD OF THE
MAJOR JUST AS HE DIES."

Helen gazed at these terrible words, the blood slowly receding from her face.

"Go on, Miss Croton," snapped Mrs. Bly.

"I am ill," Helen said slowly, "and can not read further."

"I hired you to entertain me, and insist upon it. Lately you have not been yourself at all, and I just think you are worrying over that young Southerner, who was flirting with you. It must not last. I told you that he was only filling up time, paying attention to you. I mean well by you, but you are so disagreeable when you are moony, having headaches and everything else," and she rocked back and forth with much energy

How the unfortunate girl wished that she could confide in this, the only woman she knew, but that was impossible. To admit that she had allowed herself to be so imposed upon, would only heighten her scorn, so, although her head was swimming, she smiled slightly, and said mockingly, resuming her seat:

"Perhaps two played at that game. You see I knew of Pansy Arlington."

"And who is she?"

"The lady he married. I presume their marriage was a little hurried on aceount of his father's sickness. He was going to invite me down to their old, retired plantation home, or rather have her do so, for he wanted me to be her companion. I see an account here."

Well she knew that she had given this terrible old woman sufficient to harp upon, to release her from reading the ghastly details out loud.

"And you dared to be planning to leave me, and go South? I who have done so much for you. You ungrateful hussy! You shameless creature! I'll show you," and she clenched her fist and shook it at the stately girl, who rising, said decidedly:

"Please stop. I will not permit any one to talk to me in such fashion. If you please, I resign right now. I will not remain your companion another moment."

"Do it, and I'll have you thrust out of doors."

"I do not care to remain."

"You shan't have your month's wages."

"Very well."

"I'll tell the landlord that I'm not responsible for your room."

"Will you kindly refrain from any more of such talk," said the girl firmly, although hitherto she had resignedly endured much worse. "Just listen. You say I have been of little use the past month. I believe the bills for the month are settled tomorrow. I will order that mine for that time be made separate, and I will settle it. I never want to see your face again, and I hope some time you will realize how cruel you have been to a very unfortunate one," and she fairly swept out of the room and downstairs to the office, ordering that her bill be sent to her at once.

"Just wait a moment, Miss Croton, and I'll make it out for you," the clerk said gently. As he felt consideration for her, his eyes had been keen; he had seen the love grow between her and Calhoun, and when he had read the Sunday paper, he understood what she must be enduring.

Helen hesitated a moment, then asked in a low tone:

"Have you the Sunday paper, Mr. Goodrich?"

"Yes, Miss Croton, at your service," he returned, pushing it toward her, with a neatly written bill.

"My room will be vacant in an hour," she said, as she paid the bill, and took it receipted from him.

"Miss Croton," he began uneasily.

"Yes."

"Are you leaving Mrs. Bly?"

"Yes."

"Have you selected upon a place to stay? I was thinking that mother would be so glad to have you come to us for a little."

A little of the load lifted from Helen's heart. Mrs. Goodrich was a very pleasant, motherly kind of a woman, whom Helen had met a number of times, and felt grateful for her kindness to the lonely companion.

"Will you keep the secret?" Helen asked, her lip trembling slightly.

"With my life, Miss Croton.

"I can't bear speaking of it, but I am very unhappy. Some one might come here and ask for me. Will you and your mother hide me a little until my plans are settled?"

"I can answer for mother, and I guess you can count on me," was the earnest reply, and then Helen went upstairs, her head held erect, although she wondered what was the matter with her heart, it ached so.

Entering her own room, her eyes fell upon some scraps of paper, on which she had copied the rose verse Calhoun had whispered to her, and a verse which she had found in some of her reading. She had set it down so as to remember it and show to him. In her agony of mind, she took it up now, whispering:

"These brown, curled leaves were once a
rose,
As fair, as fresh, and sweet as fair,
Now summer's past, and winter snows
Have buried Hope by despair."

CHAPTER VII.

AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY.

"My child," the minister said quietly, turning towards Pansy, great despair on his kindly face, "you must not behave in any such manner. I do not lie, you are Calhoun's bride."

Kenneth turned toward his erstwhile friend, who, white as he was, gazing fiercely at the clergyman, and asked sternly:

"What does this mean? I have always believed you a man of honor. The minister here and my father declare that you two were married the night the major died. Is it so? If so, how do you explain your present attitude?" Then to Pansy he whispered something, and led her back to her chair, but stood by it.

"I am a man of honor, and I pledge it to you, that I am not married to little Pansy here, nor, much as I love her as my foster sister, do I want to become her husband. I can speak frankly because I know that she has decided upon the man she loves, and so I will not hurt her by saying just what I do," and he turned toward Pansy, who smiled back pleasantly, and held out her hand, which Calhoun raised reverentially to his lips, while the two young men shook hands. As their palms met, Kenneth said heartily:

"Next to knowing that my Pansy is true is the knowledge that my friend did not force a marriage upon a sensitive girl, at a moment when her nerves were strained, her mind engrossed with sorrow, and her personality sunk for the moment in the major's and yours."

Doctor Rolf had stood aside, his great heart stricken. He had not known of his son's love for Pansy, somehow falling in with the major's idea, but now he came forward, and said very gently, yet as one speaking with authority:

"Ken, my son, go there and sit down. We must study this out, and, Judge, we'll want your opinion on legal matters. Here Pomp," to a little darky who was chasing butterflies among the roses, "look for a roll of paper out there. All right," as the child eagerly picked it up, with the unquestioning obedience of a dog, "and now run back to the quarters," for this old home was run a good deal as it had been before the war, and its many servants lodged in the cabins their parents had occupied.

"Now," the doctor continued, "I was there, I heard the minister read the service over you two, Calhoun and Pansy, who were on each side of the major, your hands clasped, and until now supposed that you considered yourselves married. How can such a thing be, as your not being married?"

Just here Calhoun's selfishness, or rather his absorption in his own affairs, created a tangle that was to cause them all wretched trouble, and places a life in danger. By simply telling them that he was already married, the matter would have been settled, as they would all have recognized his innocence, and a telegram sent that evening would reach Helen in time to explain that terrible writeup of the midnight wedding.

In fact, he never thought of mentioning it. Not knowing that the minister had circulated the report until it came to the ears of a reporter, who had telegraphed a long account, his idea was to spare Helen. Therefore, instead of owning up, he said sternly:

"There could have been no marriage. We took no oaths, made no promises, and were simply absorbed in my father. I had never realized how much he was to me, nor what a blank his death would leave in my life. I feared for the effects upon Pansy, whom I love and honor dearly, as every one must know, and I would have left my father to die alone, rather than become a party to deceiving her in any way," and he meant every word.

"I feel that way, too. I was asked no questions, I did not know that anything special was going on. Of course I heard the minister praying, but thought it was for the passage of the major's soul, and never for an instant that he was binding together two who had no desire to marry each other, did we Cal?"

"No, dear."

The judge had been listening closely, and he asked slowly:

"You are certain you went through the service properly, asking the proper questions, and receiving the answers?"

"Yes, judge, I am. I have married a thousand people in my ministry, and I could make no mistakes."

"And this is the certificate?" taking up the roll Pansy had thrown away.

"Yes, and I thought little Pansy would like the engrossings," the old man said with a quiver in his voice.

Pansy was touched, and bending forward, she put her arms about his neck, and kissed him tenderly, saying softly:

"You dear old colonel, I would, if only the right name was there," and then both cried despairingly.

Kenneth looked into the eyes of his friend, and received comfort. Although he could not understand it, he saw plainly that Calhoun did not want Pansy as his wife, and that counted for a good deal.

The judge took up the argument again, asking the minister if he had spoken to either party about the marriage.

"Yes, I did," was the reply, through tears. "I made out an ordinary certificate, to which the doctor affixed his signature as witness."

"Your other witness?"

"Aunt Salome."

"I want to see her," the judge said, and she was summoned, while in the meanwhile he went on:

"Whom did you speak to afterwards?"

"I handed Cal the certificate, but he told me to wait, and said that the doctor and I should take charge of affairs."

"I did that much, but I supposed the roll you offered me was a certificate of father's death," Cal broke in.

As Cal spoke, Aunt Salome joined them, and Pansy, stretching her arms toward her, was gathered into her arms. Aunt Salome was a relative of almost every one in the county, but while welcome anywhere, had no settled home of her own. Of late years, as Pansy grew up, she was at the major's more than anywhere else, and loved Pansy as she would a child of her own, had she ever married.

"Aunt Salome," the judge said, placing her in a chair, "did you witness the marriage of these children?"

"Course, I did, judge."

CHAPTER VIII.

"HIS WHITE ROSE."

"You couldn't, auntie," Pansy cried indignantly, "for we weren't married, and I don't want to be married to Cal."

"Law, honey," cried the kind-hearted old maid, fondling the girl as though she was a child, "who do you want to marry?"

"Ken Rolf," she said, even without a blush.

The thoroughly orthodox Aunt Salome was horrified, and she looked it, but the judge broke in asking question after question, to which he received plain replies.

"Was it an old notion of the major's," he asked.

The two old men nodded their heads, and Aunt Salome said decidedly:

"Ever since this dear child was brought here."

"Did you know anything about it?" turning to Cal.

Calhoun, sullen-mouthed, looked up from his shoes which he had been apparently contemplating, but in reality it was the face of Helen he saw, and said ungraciously:

"Yes, the major spoke to me about it when I was about fifteen, and if I remember, I told him that it was all right, but I was just a child then."

"True," the judge said slowly, then he turned towards the minister.

"Is this on record?"

"Of course not," broke from Calhoun.

"Surely. He told me to attend to it," persisted the old man. He was becoming angry.

"You recorded this shameful intrigue, this conspiracy?" thundered Cal, rising to his full height. "I could kill you for it. With your presumptuous meddling you have done a terrible thing, and as God is my witness I'll never forgive you."

"Nor will I, either," stormed Kenneth.

"My Helen, my darling girl!" was Cal's thought. A terror seized hold of him. What if she see it? Then he quieted himself, for he knew that the matter of a wedding at such a lonely place would not prove interesting to the New York papers.

"Your opinion, judge?"

It was the doctor who asked. His face was drawn, for he felt that he and the minister had taken things for granted, and then he knew what a blasting effect this would have on his son's life.

"First, Pansy, did the major speak to you?"

"It's a hard question to answer, judge. I felt that I must speak to Cal first before Ken and I were openly engaged. We knew we loved each other, and I have his ring," holding out her pretty hand, upon which the only ring was a handsome diamond. "We could not announce it until Cal came home, or that was the way I felt."

"Then you realized that the major had made such plans for you two?"

"Yes, but I never thought of marrying him. We are not suited to each other, and could not be happy."

"That is not the question, my child. I am afraid that there is no escape. There is no necessity for a license, according to our laws, and therefore almost anything counts a marriage in this State. No, much as I want to speak differently, I can only render the verdict of a legal marriage, and offer this advice. It seems hard, but you have to face it. Forget any other attachments, and settle down here on this nice home you have inherited, jointly, for such is the will, and try to be all you can to each other."

"My advice, exactly, and in time you will forget. It seems hard in the bloom of youth, but as you grow older, the pain grows easier, and you will both forget."

Kenneth's eyes were blazing, but before he could speak, Pansy stood up and said gravely:

"I want to tell you something, you men whose youth is far back in the past, who cannot remember that some never forget. The dear old man whom we laid to sleep in white roses remembered until almost the hour of his death. There was one whom he loved, to whom all his heart was given, and to him she was his White Rose." They glanced around them. A sudden light dawned upon them, and they bowed their heads, they understood her.

"The major proved in his life that such love as his is for life. A 'try-to-make-the-best-of-it-love' is but weak affection compared to a devotion like his. Gentlemen, the major has gone to meet, not the wife of his youth, but the love of his life, his pure White Rose, my mother. I think the love between us too," laying her hand upon Kenneth's shoulder, "is like his for my mother. I do not know if she ever knew here, but I know she knows now. I will not waste my life and my love, and I utterly refuse to accept this husband, or to admit that any marriage was performed."

"And by all I consider holy, so do I," Calhoun returned fiercely. "I too, love, and I refuse another bride than she."

Although the doctor laid a restraining hand upon Kenneth's shoulder, the young firebrand sprang to his feet, crying harshly:

"The day you claim my love for your wife will be your last, for I'll shoot you down like a slimy reptile," and even then Cal never thought to confess his own marriage, but was as distressed as any of them.

"What can be done?" asked the little bent minister.

The judge looked at them reflectively:

"I have lost the night train, but will take the morning one for New York," snapped Calhoun.

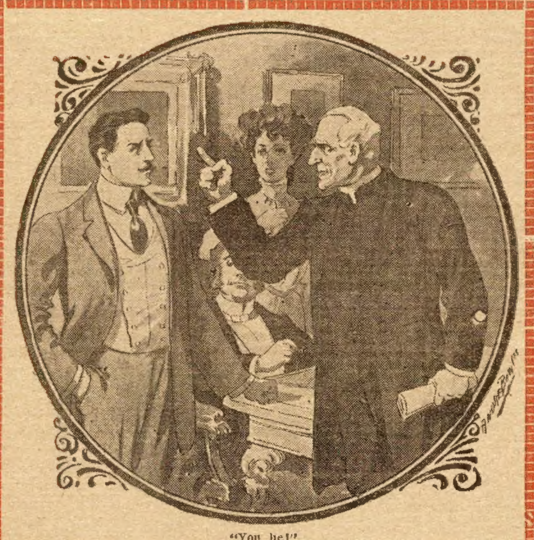
"Better do that, lad, for a short time. Then, Ken, there are some cases down the county, you really must look after. Aunt Salome will look after Pansy, who can retire behind her mourning and refuse herself to all callers. As for me, I'll read up, and see if there is any one who has had such a case brought before him."

"I'll read, too, for I intend to win my sweetheart," Ken broke in, and with that all had to be satisfied, although Aunt Salome felt the world slipping from beneath her feet, when Pansy utterly refused to wear a wedding ring and clung to her diamond, never removing it from her little finger.

"Child it ain't decent, it ain't. A married woman, and no wedding ring, but a-wearing of an engagement ring of another man," to which Pansy coldly replied each time:

"I'm not a married woman, and there's no harm wearing Ken's ring, because I'm engaged to him."

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this highly interesting story. We advise you to read it to the end. Do you take the Ledger regularly? You ought to do so, as it is acknowledged to be one of the most entertaining papers printed in America. For a year's subscription we send fifty-two copies of the Ledger and six fine patterns free or one of our great stereoscopes. Note our premium advertisements on pages thriteen and fifteen.



"You he!"

From Child Land.

It happened in a parochial school in South Chicago. The class was reciting its spelling lesson as I entered the room. The teacher requested me to review the lesson. After a child spelled a word I would call for a sentence in which the word was used. It all went well until the word "champagne" was given. They were able to spell it, but they all looked at me blankly when I called for the sentence. None seemed to know the meaning of the word. Finally the "tough" boy of the class began to get uneasy and raised his hand. "What is it, William?" I asked, and he blurted out at the top of his voice:

"John L. Sullivan is the prize champagne fighter of the world."

A short time ago I was in a meat market on the South Side, and a little boy, perhaps 5 years old, came in. I asked him his name and then asked him what his father did. He replied that he was the tailor across the street. I said: "He is a Frenchman, isn't he?" "No," was the reply. "He's a union man."

Harry, aged 8 years, was directed by his mother, who was not feeling well enough to go to church, to remain after Sunday school for services; to listen carefully for the text from which the minister would preach and repeat it to her when he returned. This he faithfully promised, and when the sermon was ended hurried home and in a breathless way asked his mother to get out her Bible and see how well he had remembered the text. The minister had preached from the text which reads: "An angel came down from Heaven, took a live coal and laid it upon the altar," but this is the way Harry remembered and repeated it:

"An Injun came down from New Haven and took a live colt by the tail and jerked it through the halter."

On day at luncheon there were preserved cherries on the table. In the midst of his enjoyment of them David suddenly looked up. "Mother," he gravely inquired, "are dese de cherries George Washington chopped down?"

A little 7-year-old lad, who had been late day after day, was admonished by his teacher and told if it happened again he would be sent to the principal. The next day he came late as usual and was sent to the principal, who said severely: "Late again, sir?"

The child replied: "I couldn't help it, sir, I couldn't help it."

"Why couldn't you help it?"

"Because my brother died!"

At this the principal softened at once and in sympathetic tones asked when did he die? To which the reply came: "Nine months ago."

Unwilling to Pay Twice.

"A good woman just greeted me warmly and told me she had read a great many of my speeches, so was looking forward to my address," began Booker T. Washington in a talk to the New York Universalist Club. "That places me rather in the predicament of an old Southern darky down in Alabama, who had been conducting a good church work in his little village for many years. His work prospered and his congregation staid by him, but finally word came to me that I was needed down there to settle some difficulties.

"I went down and found that the congregation, like many others more pretentious, had been falling behind in the minister's salary and finally had refused altogether to pay it. Well, I talked it all over with the good brother and called a meeting of the congregation for that night. Then I got down to work and told them how Brother Jackson had spent the best years of his life toiling with them in season and out. I pictured the good he had done and the sacrifices he had made for them.

"My audience began to get warmed up and I saw that I had them all with me except one old fellow near the back of the little log church, who managed to keep his hatbrim always in front of his face, and whenever I'd get especially earnest he'd grunt out:

" 'Ain't going to pay no more salary. Ain't goin' to pay that minister no mo'."

"So, at length, I said to him, 'Brother, come up here where we can see you and then tell us why Brother Jackson shouldn't be paid for his labors here.'

"The old fellow straightened up in his seat, took down his hat from before his face and answered:

" 'Well, suh, Brother Jackson's all right, but we done pay fo' them same sermons las' yeah.' "

GROWING CHILDREN

The Period When the Nervous Activity Is at Its Greatest.

A medical journal says:

"Against the practice of giving tea and coffee to children, we cannot speak too strongly.

"Childhood is the period when the nervous activity is at its greatest. The brain is ever busy receiving new impressions.

"Reflex action, co-ordination of muscles and the special senses are all under a special course of training. The nervous system is pushed to its utmost capacity, and long is the list of victims that follow its overstimulation. In these little people, nothing but harm can come from the use of such articles as tea or coffee.

"Bad, then, as this practice is, let us as physicians be aggressive in its prohibition. Do not be satisfied by answering 'No,' when asked as to its use, but let us teach the families with whom we come in contact, that such practice is evil. We speak emphatically, because not only among the poor and uneducated, but among the rich, who should know better, this practice is marvelously prevalent."

A man who tried Postum Food Coffee said that it might be solid nourishment, but he didn't like its taste. He had not discovered the secret of making delicious Postum. After boiling commences, allow it to boil full 15 minutes. Not simply to put it on the stove for 15 minutes, but count the 15 minutes after boiling commences. That brings out the food value and the delicious flavor. It certainly does make the children bright and healthy, and has proven a Godsend to many an adult whose daily ails were not understood until Postum was used in place of Coffee. "There's a Reason." Postum properly made has a coffee taste similar to the mild, high grade Javas. Read the little health classic, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

THE CHICAGO LEDGER
35 YEARS OLD.

Published Every Saturday
—BY—
W. D. BOYCE CO.

All communications should be addressed to
THE CHICAGO LEDGER,
112, 114 DEARBORN ST.,
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

Single subscriptions to the Chicago Ledger by mail $1.00 a year, 50 cents for six months, in advance. If not paid in advance, $2.00 a year, $1.00 for six months. Remittances should be made by Bank Draft, Registered Letter, Postoffice or Express Money Order, payable to The Chicago Ledger. Subscription price in Canada, $1.50 a year.

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No man is so poor as he who has nothing but money.

Only a note shaver can successfully whittle down expenses.

When the quiet man does make a noise in the world it counts.

Nothing warms some men up like an application of cold cash.

And the man who sells parasols is engaged in a shady business.

It is so quiet in Russia that any one who listens may hear a bomb drop.

The fruit tree agent doesn't care to be known as a professional grafter.

It's easy for one man to get rich quick if he meets a lot of others who want to.

Some men make a specialty of exchanging their brass for other people's gold.

After one girl has broken a man's heart some other girl comes along and mends it.

Secretary Taft has met the West, but whether or not it is his remains to be seen.

Our idea of a nuisance is a man who butts in when we are talking about ourselves.

Switzerland's precipices, as first aids to the fool-killer, have begun their season's campaign.

Many a good woman thinks she has discharged her duty to her husband by praying for him.

Don't attempt to hand a woman satisfactory compliments unless you are an accomplished liar.

It's as difficult to start a modest man talking about himself as it is to stop him after he once gets started.

Many a man has become famous between two days—only to wake up with a dark-brown taste in his mouth.

Japan announces that its intentions are pacific. We had suspected that for some time. In fact, the entire Pacific.

You can always reach the hearts of men and women by stuffing them—the former with food, the latter with flattery.

We are sure we are here, but we are not sure of the hereafter—therefore it's advisable for us to be as good as we can.

When a man finally does graduate from the school of experience the flowers he receives are hauled to their destination by the undertaker.

The first thing a woman does after discovering that her husband's love has grown cold is to go through his pockets in search of the reason.

Inventions that would put modern armaments out of business would do more for world peace than any ground and lofty oratorical tumbling that may be done at The Hague.

THE DAMNATION OF FATHER FITZGERALD.

BY HELENA BALLARD WHITE.

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Begun in No. 25, June 22. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER VII.

Mercedes' heart stood still as she looked on Fabian's cold face. Then he stirred! Surely, he stirred! Again she commenced to call wildly, then fell to kissing his lips, softly whispering words of love. Their rigidness gave way. She bent her ear to his breast. "He breathes! he breathes!" she murmured. "Fabian, breathe, breathe—come back to life—come back to your Mercedes." She grabbed at his hands, his arms, his body. "You live, oh, you do live, Fabian! Fabian, awake, awake, Mercedes calls."

Slowly the eyes of the sleeper unclosed, then the lids fell again.

She suppressed a scream and whispered close in his ear. "Fabian, open your eyes—don't go to sleep again. You live! Fabian, my love. Open your eyes and get up."

As his eyes again unclosed, he lay staring at her for a few moments while his dulled and dormant senses resumed their normal state.

"Mercedes," he murmured, then let his eyes wander about the room. Presently he sat up and yawned quite naturally, rubbed his eyes and face and acted much as though he had only been wakened from a deep sleep.

"Back in my room, Mercedes? Help me to think. Our plans succeeded? Yes, yes, all comes back to me now. It is as I believed. I have been like one dead. Have I really tricked the hangman, Mercedes?"

"Oh, Fabian, my love, my love!" she could only gasp, as she wound her arms about his neck.

"We have tricked them, Mercedes?"

"Yes, yes. They thought you died in your prison cell of heart disease. You were found like one dead in the morning, just as you predicted, and I brought you home. You are saved, Fabian, saved!"

He sat and caressed her for a time, then whispered:

"Does every one sleep? Is all ready? Have you prepared for our journey, my love?"

"On the top of the clothes-press here you will find everything, Fabian. Let me help you to rise. But soft, I thought I heard some one moving."

She crept quietly to the door of the room where slept the nun and peeped in. All was still. The fathers slept on the upper floor and the servants in the rear.

"She is sleeping soundly—poor sister! She did not close her eyes in sleep last night, but prayed the whole night through for your deliverance, as did many. She is in need of rest."

"Always faithful—the faith that counts, one can expect from the dear sisters, Mercedes," he replied.

His faculties now fully restored, the one thus miraculously snatched from death rose and stumbled about, catching at the furniture for support like some drunken man. As he regained his strength, he reached for the bundle of clothes in the press and said:

"We must be quick, my darling. Make yourself ready at once."

Stepping into a dressing-room just off, Mercedes hastily removed her outer garments. Underneath she was fully dressed as a boy. Now standing before the mirror, she pinned the long light hair close to her head and fitted over it a dark curly wig. "I surely look like a boy, not Mercedes Maturin—all but the cap and I am ready." Quickly donning this, she called through the door. "I am ready, Fabian."

"Come, then," he answered. "Have you the money and all?"

"Yes, yes—and your suit case, it is behind the door filled with necessaries. Can't you take it, Fabian?"

He picked up the satchel, and motioning her to follow, the two stole down the front stairs and opened the street door. He peeped cautiously about, no one was in sight.

"Come," he said, and stepped out into the night a free man, but dead to the world.

They walked down the boulevard a few blocks and boarded a street car that took them to a downtown station. He reasoned that they would be less observed in one of the large depots which swarmed with odds and ends of humanity from all parts of the globe than in a smaller one in the outlying districts.

"It seems every one is looking at me," said Mercedes after they had entered the depot. "Do you suppose any one could suspect that I am a girl?"

"No, it isn't your disguise; it is your pretty face that attracts attention, my dear. Perhaps it would be wise to rub a little smut on your nose and chin, You are much too fair for a boy."

"I will do that," she said laughing. "But tell me, have you any clearly defined course of travel mapped out?"

"I think that Edith Burke went to Kansas. She and her brother own a cattle ranch out in the western part of the State. I do not know the name of the town that it lies near, but I know her brother's name, you see, and the county. When we strike the county we will get off and knock about until we run onto the place. If we do not find her there we will return to Chicago and try to get some clew to work upon. I believe, though, that I shall surprise her out in that section. The detective detailed upon the case failed to locate her in that region. Her brother, I believe, is something of a crook himself, and no doubt would readily shield his sister or aid her in this hellish scheme. I have learned from the papers that he has collected a heavy life insurance which she carried. A handsome pair of villains we shall have to hand over to the officers once we have them trapped."

When they at last found themselves on the train steaming away from all the harrowing scenes through which they had passed of late, they commenced to congratulate themselves upon their escape and the success of their plans.

"O, Fabian, I am so, so happy in thinking of your deliverance," whispered Mercedes, as she snuggled closer to him in the seat of the dusty car.

"It is certainly a wonderful and miraculous escape, my dear. I am thanking God with every pulse beat that my life has been spared and I am free to unearth the plot that will restore me to favor with my fellow men. My Heaven, what suffering a vicious woman can bring upon a man!"

"Oh, Fabian, I know now how you must have felt when they hauled me from the lake and I lay apparently dead before you. Heaven knows what I suffered while you lay in that condition. It was hard not to believe that you were really dead. I could think of only one thing worse, and that was, had the law its way. How horrible it is to condemn an innocent man."

"Never mind, my dear, better things are in store for both of us."

"How do you suppose the fathers will manage about the burial?"

"That is easy. I left a letter instructing them to say that they had concluded to bury me secretly by night, that on account of my connection with the church and the crime of which I was convicted, a strictly private burial were best. The fathers will not betray me, now that I have made my escape and they know the errand which we have gone upon. Your absence from the school can be attributed to a protracted illness brought on from the trouble which you have been through. I am buried and you are ill—what has the world to do with us? We are as free as the air which we breathe, so let no disturbing thoughts enter your mind so far as this is concluded. But, my dear, I know you must be sadly in need of sleep. I will have the porter make up your berth. I do not care to sleep myself."

"Nor I, Fabian. I prefer to sit by you. How good God is to let you live, and how glorious it is to be in the world by ourselves—just by ourselves!"

"That very thought was occupying my mind, Mercedes. Still, it seems I should not have brought you, now that we have started and I am able to think calmly."

"And why, Fabian?" she questioned, looking up with her young, innocent, trusting eyes.

"I supposed that we could get married at once. But in this disguise it will be hard to manage, I fear."

"Oh, never mind, Fabian, we shall have a lovely wedding when the time comes. It were best to be married in the right way. Until then we shall be together, so what does it matter?"

"Nothing matters, were all the world as pure in mind as yourself, Mercedes," was his mental answer. Then he said aloud.

"We had better be married as soon as the opportunity affords. I hope it will be within a few days."

"I can't agree with you in this, Fabian. I want a wedding where all our friends and the public can look on and admire the man who has been so cruelly tortured and misrepresented."

He changed the subject very subtly and they talked on for some time. Then he rose and looked for the porter.

Returning, he said: "You are half dead for sleep, I can see this, Mercedes. Let the porter take care of you." Telling her good night, he now left her and sought the smoker where he sat alone with his thoughts until dawn.

He bitterly reproached himself for ever thinking of bringing her along with him on this journey. It was very unwise and imprudent for him to have done so. Perhaps it were better if she returned immediately. Still, it might place her in a trying position with the fathers and he would be greatly worried about her welfare. He must without a doubt try to find some way to marry her at once. How this could be accomplished was now his study. He feared severe and just criticism from the fathers for this heedless step which he had taken, but what to do to correct the error he did not know.

Mercedes did not waken until nearly noon. How happy were her thoughts as she opened her eyes to the broad light of day and realized that joy had replaced her grief and anxiety. Quickly dressing, she went to look for Fabian. She found him on the rear platform with the latest edition of a Chicago paper.

After warmly greeting her, he held out the paper and said:

"Here is some interesting news, Tommy, about that priest in Chicago who was to pay the penalty of his crime on yesterday. It seems the fellow cheated the hangman. Died of heart disease the night before he was to be executd. 'Scared to death,' one of the reporters puts it," he concluded, laughing heartily.

With keen interest the two now read the highly sensational account of this unlooked for denouement. Almost two pages were devoted to this startling affair and the romance connected with it. While the dead priest seemed to have little sympathy bestowed upon him outside his church people, who deeply deplored his fate and stubbornly refused to believe in his guilt, the entire public pitied the beautiful and faithful young girl who had stood so nobly by her lover. Here followed a vivid description of her visit to the prison on the morning of his death and pleading for his remains, a picture of her kneeling at the feet of the jailer, accompanying the sketch. There was also a realistic scene of the midnight burial which was kept secret from the public, only the Catholic fathers following the body to its last resting-place.

"So we have the full protection of the fathers as I believed, Mercedes. How happy I shall be when the time comes for me to face them in my entire innocence," whispered her companion.

It was not until evening that the two wanderers left the train at a small station, having reached the region of their quest. Fabian had made inquiries of a fellow traveler regarding this locality and learned that two or three cattle ranches were close about. Who owned them he could not say.

"We will put up at the only hostelry that the village affords and try to learn something more about the owners of these ranches. In the morning we will get a good team of horses and try to unearth something. I fear the brother of Edith Burke is not using his own name and so that will make him more difficult to locate. Were it not for this fact, the detective surely would have run onto the fellow, since he must be in this county," said Fabian, as they walked along.

Securing for each a room, Fabian left Mercedes to look after herself and strolled down to the office to have a chat with the uncouth looking landlord. He felt that he was on something of a wild-goose chase, since cattle ranches were common in that part of the country, but he must make a stab at something.

After a few words had passed between them, Fabian observed:

"You have some fine cattle ranches about here, I understand."

"Well, we have some, but as to how fine they air, I wouldn't want to say," answered the landlord. "I reckon they ain't much money bein' made off'n cattle this year. Last winter was a hard one on 'em, and a good many head was killed by the storms. From what I can learn most every one who is engaged in this industry is ready to throw up—quit th' business."

"I am sorry to learn that there has been so little profit. It seems they must not have had the right kind of shelter. I had thought of investing in a ranch myself."

"Well, if a body's a mind to put money into it, there's money to be made out of it," returned the landlord. "These fellers about here hain't got enough surplus capital to give their stock the proper shelter—you air right about that. This is a good time to strike a bargain, if a person wants to invest."

"I understand that Mr. Burke, Ed Burke, has a very good ranch near here."

"Maybe, I never heerd of him. Burke—Burke," repeated the man, removing his hat and running his fingers through his unkempt locks. "I reckon I don't know him."

"Who owns the ranch about twelve miles north?"

"Let me see—now blamed if I can think—I never see th' feller but onct or twict—I'll ask some one else. His name ain't Burke, though, that's dead certain. I'd know if I heerd it again. Bob," he called to a man who sat in a cloud of tobacco smoke in front of the small, greasy window, "what's that feller's name as owns the ranch north of here about twelve mile. You're an old settler, you oughter know."

"Brady, Ed Brady," replied the man.

"Yes, that's his name," continued the obliging host. "Do you know any one around these parts by the name of Burke?" he asked again.

"No—never heard of any one by that name about here except the grocer here in town. There may be some relations of his'n around, but I never heerd of 'm."

"How old a man is this Burke, the grocer?" questioned Fabian.

"Nigh seventy, I reckon," answered the landlord.

"Not the one I have in mind or was directed to see."

"No, old man Burke never owned a ranch."

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"About this man Ed Brady, the names might have been confused," said Fabian. "Can you direct me to this place?" he asked, now drawing a chair near the man who sat before the window.

After the two had conversed for some time, the old settler knocked the ashes from his pipe and observed:

"Some relation of your'n, I reckon."

"No, not that. I heard that his ranch was for sale and thought it might be a good investment."

After getting what information he could, abian went to look up Mercedes and tell to be up early the next morning to ve with him many miles into the coun-.

The two talked together for a while in the small dingy parlor of the village hotel, then bade each other good night and repaired to their rooms.

True to her word, Mercedes was up with the sun eager to start on the drive which might lead to the hiding place of the fugitive.

For the first few miles she greatly enjoyed the ride, though the weather had turned cold and the strong winds seemed to pierce every part of her being. She became so cramped with cold, however, by the time they reached a farm where Fabian stopped to make inquiry, she was glad to enter the small farm house and feel the warmth of the fire.

Upon stepping inside, they found the farmer and his wife busily engaged in making sausage, while three small children played about. Mercedes watched curiously the process, the grinding of fat and the sputtering of grease. The wife kept right on with her work and gave her visitors no notice whatever except to pass the time of day.

"I suppose this is what one would call love in a cottage," thought Mercedes, as she looked about. "I wonder if love really exists under such conditions. Yes, oh, yes, of course. It would be so with Fabian and me. Why not with these people? It is putting it to the test, though, no doubt. This must be their kitchen, dining-room, living-rom and factory, since there is only the little room off with the beds. She gave a glance upward. From the rough beams of the unfinished dwelling were suspended smoked hams, sides of bacon and other cured meats, also great dried branches of something that she had never seen before. After looking more closely she discovered it to be peanuts still on the vines, probably hung there to dry.

While the young girl was making the observations of a life wholly new to her, Fabian had engaged the farmer in conversation about his neighbor or rather the man who owned the ranch some miles beyond. To his surprise and disappointment he learned that was not the name of the present owner, but a younger man by the name of Brady, a son-in-law, had a ranch some twelve or fourteen miles beyond the one to which he had been directed.

"We have all of twenty-five miles yet to go, Mercedes," said Fabian as they again started on their way. I was misinformed as to the distance of the one we started for, and the man Brady lives way beyond. I fear it will prove a hard trip for you."

"Don't bother about me, Fabian. If we only find the man, and he is the one for whom we are looking, I am ready to endure any sort of hardship."

"Well, it is only a supposition of mine that the man Ed Brady may be the fellow for whom I am looking. The similarity of the names is all that I have on which to found my suspicions. If this Burke is going under an assumed name, that incident probably threw the detective off the track who has already been knocking around this section. A small thread to build one's hope on, but something tells me I am right in my suspicions."

"I hope so, Fabian, but it seems hardly probable. Dear me, how some people live! I kept wondering all the time if they could be happy—those two making sausage—and what interest they could find in living? How narrow the lives of some people are."

"Yes, but they do not realize it, having known nothing better. Happiness lies in the heart, and it is happiness that we are all after. The man and woman whom you just saw have their interests, acquaintances and pleasures, just the same as those of wealth in a large city, only not on so large a scale. They have three healthy children. I know of more than one millionaire in Chicago who would exchange his wealth for the health of his child or children."

The drive was a long one and night was fast falling by the time they reached the next farm where lived the father-in-law of Ed Brady.

"Where is the house?" asked Mercedes as Fabian turned his horses in from the highroad.

"The roof of it you can see, my dear, just over there," he said, pointing to the left. "The hut itself is under ground. Such an abode is called a dugout in these parts. I had hoped we might find accommodations for the night at this place. We must if we can, though it is ever so mean, for the night will be dark and it would be impossible for a stranger to find his way over the prairies."

Filled with wonder, Mercedes followed him down a short flight of steps which led to the underground doorway. Their summons was answered by an elderly woman with a troubled and kindly face. Extending a cordial welcome she invited them to sit by a small cooking stove, then lifting a lid, proceeded to add more fuel, which proved to be corncobs, to the scant fire.

"It must be an industry in itself to keep the fire replenished," Mercedes mused as she watched the woman. Then she let her eye wander about the room. Evidently there was but one. It was quite large and without any sort of carpeting. Two beds occupied opposite corners farthest from the stove, dressed with coarse gray blankets and very white pillows. Back of the stove were some shelves on which a few dishes were arranged. Along the other side of the wall hung some wearing apparel. These articles together with a table and a few chairs constituted the furnishings of the underground hovel. Everything, she noticed, was scrupulously clean.

"I 'low it's about cold enough to snow," observed the woman, still busying herself with the fire.

"Yes, it looks as though we might have a fall before morning," answered Fabian. "I wondered if we could get accommodations of you for the night. I am willing to pay liberally for any that might be offered us."

"Well, I reckon it will be all right, but my old man will be in directly and I'd best leave that for him to decide. Where might you be going?"

"We started this morning to drive to Mr. Brady's place. But it is much farther than I was told."

"Yes, it's some miles northeast of here. He's my son-in-law, and the meanest white man that ever lived, I reckon. Ah, there comes father now," she concluded as a heavy tread was heard on the steps outside. "Ben," she continued, "this man and boy wants to lodge with us tonight. It's jest as you say. It makes no difference to me if you think we can keep them."

"Why, if the strangers can put up with our poor accommodations, they air quite welcome," answered the man. "It's beginnin' to snow, I see, but bein' the first fall, likely it won't amount to much. We ain't but one room here, but we've got two beds and can give you one of them."

At this Mercedes ducked her head and colored furiously, while Fabian sprang to his feet and said:

"Thank you, sir, we shall be glad to accept of your hospitality. I had better go now and look after the horses. You can shelter them, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, we've a pretty good barn, a better barn than we have house, like most of the others about here," answered the host, as he took his hat and followed.

When they came in again Fabian turned to the woman and said:

"Have you no children, madam?"

"No, not to home here," she answered with a sigh. "She's married and gone away. I miss my daughter terrible bad. That rascally Ed Brady got all our money away from us and our daughter, too. He's the meanest——"

"There, there, mother! Strangers ain't interested in our affairs. Suppose you get supper and fry some nice ham and eggs."

"I was jest goin' to see about the supper—but it strikes me, Ben, you take Ed Brady's cheatin' powerful easy. You allus was too easy-goin'. There's the whole trouble. But Ed's the very feller this man is lookin' fer. I suppose your business with him is none of our'n, sir," concluded the wife, turning to Fabian.

"I have no hesitancy in stating my business with the man," answered Fabian, much interested. "I am looking for a well-stocked ranch and was directed to his."

"Well, he's got a fine one," replied the host, as he washed his hands in a tin basin, "but I didn't know it was for sale, did you, mother?"

"No, I didn't, but I ain't seen Molly nor him for quite a spell. But, father, it might be so. Maybe he 'lows to sell the ranch and take all the money, Molly's share along with his own, and skin out again like he done onct before. You best look after this and——"

"Th' coffee's bilin' over, mother," interrupted the farmer. You see, sir," he continued, turning to Fabian, "our only daughter ran off and married this feller, agin our wishes, a few years ago, and—well, she ain't so happy as she might be, so of course her mother feels pretty hard towards him."

"Not only for the way he treats Molly, but for the way he skinned us out of every cent, pretendin' to invest in bogus minin' property. He's th' honriest whelp—you know I'm right, Ben," answered the woman doggedly, as she stirred the coffee. "I never show much temper till that feller's name is mentioned, then my Indian blood biles over!"

"He has lived here some years, then?" questioned Fabian.

"Nigh four," answered the woman.

"Any of his own family about or with him? I might have the wrong man," subtly remarked Fabian.

"He ain't no relation that I know of except a sister. But she's only here when she comes on a visit. She's mighty well-to-do and lives in the city of Chicago, way up north on Lake Michigan. Sich dressin' and fixin' I never saw the beat before! I'm hopin' she come by her money in a better way than he did his'n. Molly can't stand for her. She says with all her money she's the stingiest critter she ever see."

"Quite a way for her to come on a visit. She is here now, did you say? I would like to see her and ask about real estate there. She might know of——"

"No, I didn't say she was here now, you're mistaken, sir. For my part I hope she never'll come again. Molly's life is miserable enough without any of his folks to pester her. An aunt of his'n is there now visitin', and Molly says if anything she's a worse crank and harder to get along with than the sister, and a deal like her—that is, in her ways. The dear knows she don't look nor dress nothin' like her, fer th' aunt is as plain and shabby lookin' as the sister is flashy and dressy. Molly tells me she has plenty, but is too penurious to wear decent clothes. Molly 'lows she's got that trunk of her'n full of clothes, but she won't wear 'em or even let a body get a peek at 'em. I've seen people before that let their clothes wear out on hooks instid of their body. She's thinkin' of investin' in Dodge City property and that's what she's here for, I reckon—in Kansas, I mean—makin' Ed a visit before she goes on to Dodge. I wish she'd go if she intends to."

"Blessed be a woman's tongue," was Fabian's inward comment as he shot an occasional glance at Mercedes. "We are on the right track, I haven't a doubt." Clearing his voice, he said aloud:

"She has been here some time, then?"

"Yes, several months."

"She is from Chicago, too, I suppose?"

"I never heered her say. She jest blowed in one night, and when Molly ast where she lived, she said she'd jest come up from Mexico where she'd been visitin' some relations. Beatin' her way, likely. She don't talk often to Molly or say much about herself. She's terrible secretive and no company at all fer Molly—jest an extra one to wait upon and cook fer."

"Perhaps she won't be here much longer, so I wouldn't worry," kindly advised Fabian. "Still here, is she?"

"Oh, yes, that's what father said—didn't you?" queried the woman of her husband.

"Yes, I saw her there last Wednesday. She's talkin' of leavin' next week, though, so Ed told me, to look up that property in Dodge City. Molly told me that Ed might go along."

"Maybe Ed's goin' to sell out here and make an investment there, too. I'd hate to have Molly go. Dear me, it seems ther's allus somethin' comin' up to pester a body nigh to death," sighed the woman as she set the supper on the table.

"Do you think there would be any chance of our geting on there tonight? I am greatly pressed for time," said Fabian, as all seated themselves to partake of an inviting meal.

Having in mind the promise of being well rewarded for lodging them, the woman quickly answered:

"It's all of eighteen miles beyond, and you know it's terrible easy to get lost on the prairies a black night like this. Then they wouldn't have no place to put you fer the night because the beds air all in use."

Fabian was somewhat disappointed with this information. He was anxious to get on to the ranch where he felt assured he would surprise his enemy. For that the eccentric aunt and Edith Burke were one and the same, he had scarcely a doubt. Then, too, with no better accommodations than the dugout offered, it would be very awkward to manage. He puzzled his brain to know what to do if they were forced to remain on there for the night. The only thing that recommended itself, was for him to pretend wakefulness and sit up during the night. "I should never have started with her," he told himself for the hundredth time. He hardly dared glance towards Mercedes, for he knew that she was greatly embarrassed.

"I think, myself, it would be taking a grave risk to try to go on tonight," said the farmer, "for no tellin' where morning would find you, and there are two or three ditches on the way it would be hard to avoid a dark night like this 'pears to be."

"I suppose it would be just as well to remain here over night," answered Fabian, consoling himself with the thought that his prey was not apt to get away in the meantime.

When the supper dishes had been washed and put away the four sat around the small stove, which the host kept feeding with fresh cobs, for an hour or more, talking among themselves on indifferent subjects.

"Did you say that Mr. Brady's sister was still living?" questioned Fabian, after he had adroitly led up to this subject again. "It seems to me the man who told me about his ranch said that he had lost a sister recently."

"That's what Molly was told some time ago by one of the neighbors," answered the woman. "She said some one saw an account of her burnin' to death in one of the papers, but Ed says it was a cousin of his'n and his sister is in Italy. Molly thinks maybe it was his sister and Ed don't want her to know about it fer some reason. We've been havin' our suspicions that likely he got some money from her death, maybe life insurance, and he don't want Molly to know about it, because he's been promisin' right straight along that as soon as he could he'd give her back the five hundred of her'n that he went and drew from the bank without her knowin' it. Anyhow, there's somethin' that's terrible peculiar about it all, because he ain't received but one letter in months from his sister, and that was just before his aunt come."

"Again must I thank the Creator of all things for giving a woman a tongue," thought Fabian, as he glowed with satisfaction over his fresh information.

Pushing her chair back against the wall, the woman now rose and said:

"If you men folks will jest be obligin' enough to step outdoors fer a few minutes I'll get into bed. We don't set up very late in these parts because we've got to be up and hustlin' early, you know. It would seem that such industry oughter bring a body somethin', but it don't bring us much aside from trouble."

Fabian at once arose to do her bidding, but Mercedes, forgetting that she was a boy, made no move until he called to her:

"Tommy," he said, "perhaps you had better come along, and we will go see if the horses are all right in every way."

Mercedes started up with a little gasp, then reaching for her cap, followed him with burning cheeks.

The two stood in the dooryard for some moments without speaking, then Fabian suddenly burst out laughing at the ludicrous situation in which they found themselves.

Mercedes was too greatly embarrassed to appreciate his humor and retained the same sober expression.

"There, forgive me, little girl, and cheer up a bit," he said as he left off laughing. "It isn't half so bad as being lost out on the prairies a cold night like this. Go back, directly, and crawl into bed. I will sit up through the night. I will pretend that I am too troubled in mind to sleep, or make some excuse."

"But, Fabian, you'll get awfully wearied with sitting up in that way. Perhaps if you'd suggest a bed on the floor——"

"No, that won't do. It might create suspicion. I have sat up many a night and do not mind that part of it in the least. The only objection to this is that it might create some uneasiness in the minds of the old gentleman and his wife, and they might think I was trying to loot them. But I'll try them and see. We can well afford to put up with such trifling annoyances, Mercedes, in view of the information that has come to us through lodging here. I am posi-

(Continued on page fourteen.)

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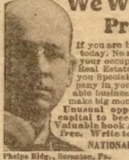

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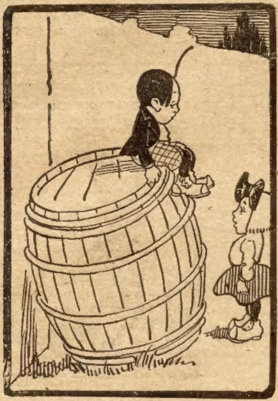

Susie—Ha! ha! I know who got a lickin'.
Johnnie— I knowed it first!

Ominous Warning.

Gracious!" exclaimed the visitor. "This neighborhood should feel proud of its bright children. Why, all the little boys are reading the newspapers to their mammas."

"Yes," laughed the big policeman on the corner, "they are all reading an item on the front page."

"And what is the item about?"

"Why, about a mother who broke her arm while spanking her little son."

Hard to Locate.

Gunner—Where are you off to, old man—the summer opera?

Guyer—No, I am going down to the strawberry festival in the basement of our church.

Gunner—Strawberry festival? Why what in the world are you going to do with those opera glasses?

Guyer—Why, look for the strawberry.

Coming to His Senses.

"Is Willie still paying attention to Tillie?"

"No."

"Did he jilt her?"

"No; he married her."

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She promised to love and obey,
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Her husband didn't even dare
To call his soul his own.

Not True to Nature.

DeAuber—Don't you think this is an excellent portrait of your wife?

Naggsby—No. There is a repose about the mouth that isn't natural.

A Weak Editor.

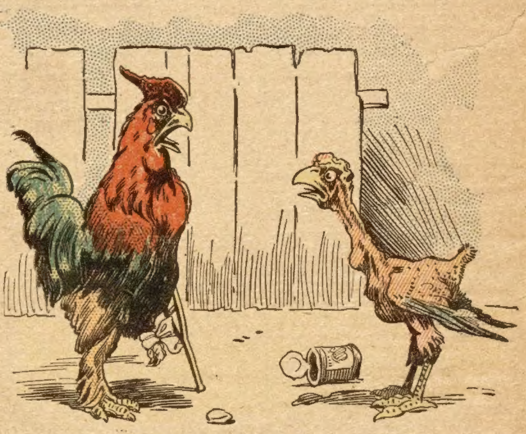
Eastern Man—So my old friend Scribbler is editing a paper out West. Is he running it in the interest of morality and good government?

Westerner—I guess not. He has never been shot at.

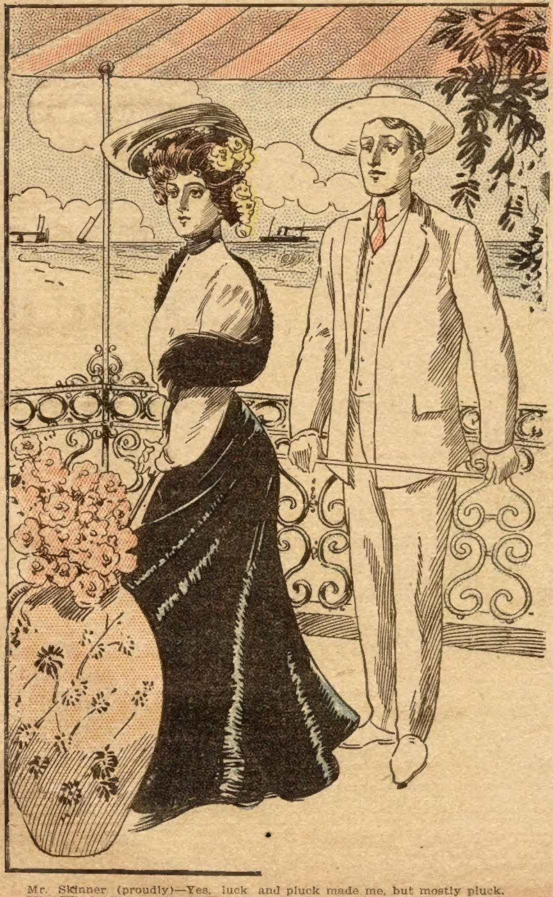
Modern Linguist.

Mrs. Harker—My husband speaks German as well as he does English. Does your husband speak more than one language?

Mrs. Parker—Oh, yes, he speaks three—English, baseball and horse.



The Big One—Yes, my foot's tied up. I've got a little corn.
The Little One—Gosh! That's just what I'm looking for.



Mr. Skinner (proudly)—Yes, luck and pluck made me, but mostly pluck.
Miss Wisely (interrupting)—Yes, luck in finding people to pluck.

Had Formed an Opinion.

Lawyer (for the defense, in a murder case)—Have you read anything about this case in the newspapers?

Possible Juror—No, sir.

Lawyer—Have you not publicly or privately expressed an opinion as to the guilt or innocence of my poor, persecuted client?

Possible Juror—No, sir. I never heard of the case until brought here as a juror.

Lawyer—Have you formed any opinion in the matter whatever?

Possible Juror—Yes, sir, I have.

Lawyer—Eh? If you never heard of the case until you entered the courtroom, how could you form an opinion? Answer that, sir—answer that, and I hope the court will give particular attention to the reply. Out with it!

Possible Juror—I have concluded that your client must be awfully guilty, or you would not find it so difficult to get a jury to suit you.

A Clergyman's Wit.

An Irish priest had labored hard with one of his flock to induce him to give up whisky.

"I tell you, Michael," said the priest, "whisky is your worst enemy, and you should keep as far away from it as you can."

"Me enemy is it, father?" responded Michael, "and it was your riverence's self that was tellin' us in the pulpit only last Sunday to love our enemies!"

"So I was, Michael," rejoined the priest, "but I didn't tell you to swallow them."

Encouraging.

He had been worshiping at her shrine for several moons, but was somewhat backward about coming forward.

"No," he said one evening when they were alone in the parlor, "I never had a sister and I don't believe I'd care to have one."

"Well," she rejoined in a tone redolent with encouragement, "you'll never have a better opportunity to get one."

Her Experience.

"We should remember to cast our bread upon the waters," said the parson who was making a duty call.

"Yes, I tried it once," replied the lady member of his flock.

"And did it return after many days?" queried the good man.

"I'm sorry to say it didn't," answered the lady. "It was my first attempt at breadmaking, and it sunk immediately."

A Flimsy Amendment.

"That picture of X's is a fearful daub, don't you think?"

The Gentleman Addressed—I beg your pardon, but I am the artist.

"Oh, I beg ten thousand pardons! The fact is, I don't know anything about art. I just repeat what I hear every one saying."

A Generous Dad.

"Your father is heartless! I told him I couldn't live without you."

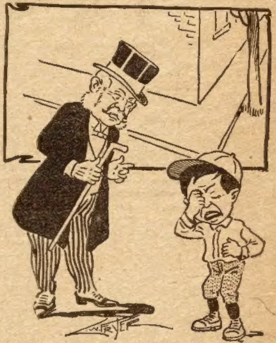
"And what did he say?" asked his sweetheart.

"He offered to pay my funeral expenses."

Ladies, Preserve Your Youthful Appearance.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results.

Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.



The Man—My boy, don't feel so badly——
The Kid—Aw, how do you feel when your girl calls you a pie-faced slob an' tells yer to chase yourself?

A Dainty Little Maid.

Every one ought to have her. She is dressed in pretty colors and changes the color of her skirt herself when it is going to rain. She indicates when it is wise to take an umbrella or when you can do without. She is the simplest and best of barometers. She is an ornament, a good seller for agents, a pretty gift, a good business souvenir and useful to any one. She or one of her sisters comes postpaid with full directions for only 10 cents. W. P. Randolph & Co., 78 Dearborn St., Chicago.

Thought It All Land.

"The McDougalls are so deficient in geography."

"How so, Henry?"

"Why, they said they were going to take their automobile to Jamestown."

"Indeed! What for?"

"To go scorching on Hampton roads."

JOLLITY

Great Binder Twine Offer.

If you have any use for binder twine this season, don't fail to write us and get our great binder twine offer before buying elsewhere.

We have binder twine stored in warehouses in various parts of the country, so we can get the twine to you in just a day or two after we receive your order. We have a special price and a most extraordinary binder twine offer we want you to be sure to receive before you buy a pound of twine.

Write us a postal card or letter and simply say: "Mail me your binder twine offer," and our great twine offer will be sent you by mail, postpaid, at once, together with a price quotation that will mean a great saving, protection and assurance to you.

Address SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO., CHICAGO.

A Present for a Husband.

Furniture Dealer—Yes, madam, there is no nicer present for a man than a handsome writing-desk. Look at this one, for example.

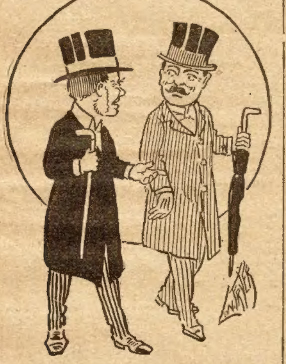
Customer—It is very pretty; but what are all those square things?

Furniture Dealer—Drawers, madam. That desk has one hundred and sixty separate drawers.

Customer—Huh! And every time he mislays anything he'll expect me to find it. Show me a desk with one drawer.

A CHANCE TO MAKE MONEY.

I have berries, grapes, peaches and apples two years old, fresh as when picked. Do not heat or seal the fruit—just put it up cold; keeps perfectly fresh and costs almost nothing. Last year I sold directions to over 120 families in one week. As there are many people poor, like myself, I feel it my duty to give you my experience, feeling confident any one can make $100 around home in a few days. I will mail bottle of fruit and full directions to any of your readers for 21 2-cent stamps, to cover co t of bottle, fruit, mailing, etc. Address Francis N. Turner, 170 to 172 Eighth Avenue, New York. Let people see and taste the fruit and you should sell hundreds of directions at $1 each.



"Since Jobson's marriage he has been leading a regular dog's life."

"You don't say."

"Fact. His wife pets him from morning till night."

A Reliable Fit Cure.

Prof. W. H. Peeke whose announcement appears on page 11 of this issue states that he seldom fails to cure all forms of epilepsy, fits and falling sickness, and that he can positively afford relief in chronic and obstinate cases. The fact that Dr. W. H. Peeke has been in business over forty years and is well and favorably known all over the United States, ought to furnish abundant assurance to sufferers from these dreadful ailments that he does what he claims.

Midnight Flyers.

The mayor of Bacon Ridge was fishing off the milldam when the stranger in the tall silk hat approached.

"Think a show would pay around here?" asked the stranger.

"What kind of a show, mister?" queried the mayor as he unhooked another eel.

"Why, a show of wild, untamed man eaters."

"Shucks! Thar be too many wild man eaters around here now, mister."

"What kind of man eaters are they?"

"Skeeters, mister, skeeters!"

From Start to Finish.

"Be mine," he implored.

"Certainly," she replied.

And so they were married and——

"Beware!" he cried.

"Oh, fudge!" she exclaimed.

So they were divorced and lived happily ever after.

In the Wrong Place.

Chapleigh—I say, dwuggist, can you—aw—giev me something to—aw—bwighten me up, doncher know?

Druggist—You're in the wrong place, young man. This is a drug store, not a night school.

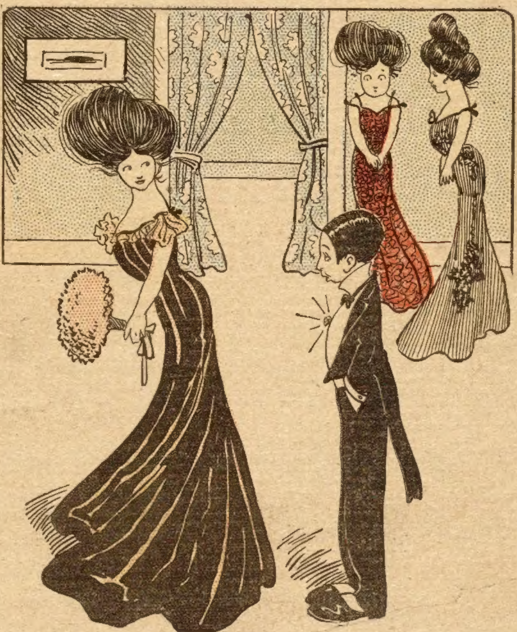
A Narrow Escape.

Although the boy ne'er learned to spell
His future wasn't wrecked;
He simply used quotation marks
And wrote in dialect.

A Hot One.

Katherine—I would rather be beautiful than wise.

Kidder—You've played in hard luck all around.



Miss Tinker (in background)—He is the flower of the family.
Miss Winker—Possible. He seems to be a blooming idiot.

Not in Stock.

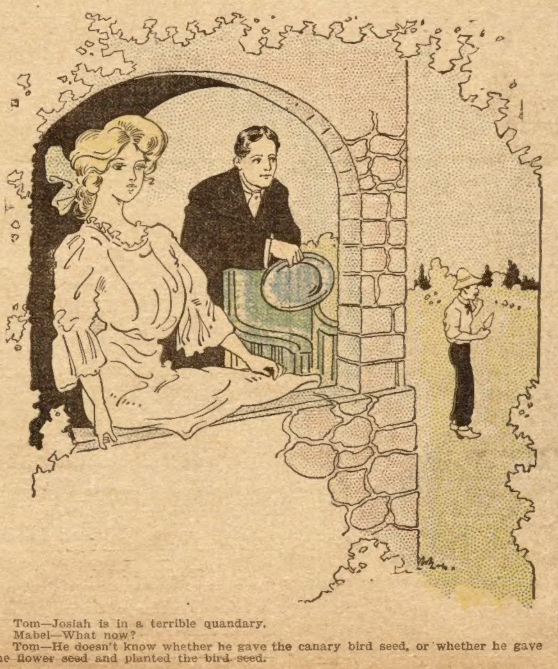
Wild-eyed Customer—Have you any goods made of sole leather or boiler-iron?

Clothing Merchant—No, sir; we don't keep boys' clothing.

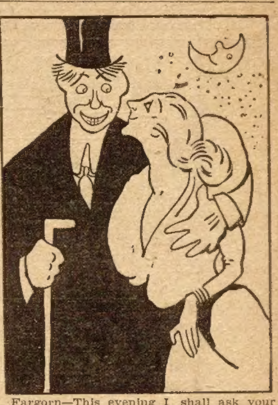
Not Quite Clear.

Stranger—Say, is there a man in this vicinity with one leg named Smith?

Farmer—Dunno. What be th' name uv his other leg?



Tom—Josiah is in a terrible quandary.
Mabel—What now?
Tom—He doesn't know whether he gave the canary bird seed, or whether he gave the flower seed and planted the bird seed.



Fargorn—This evening I shall ask your father for your hand. Don't you wish me luck?

Miss Cutting—Sure; I hope he'll have on his slippers!

The Beginning and the End.

"I want to talk to you, Mary, about that young man of yours," said her father; "when did he say 'good-night' to you last evening?"

"At ten o'clock," replied the fair girl.

"What? Why, it was one o'clock, at least."

"Oh, that was when he finished saying it."

AGENTS WANTED

Nearly all the readers of THE LEDGER will find these advertisements of interest to them. There will be found among them some excellent chances of making money by selling goods to friends, neighbors and others. Those seeking such an opportunity either as a regular or temporary occupation, should write the advertisers whose offers follow.

SALESMEN WANTED.

Men who possess selling ability can get the most for it by representing us for the sale of our popular policies of accident and health insurance. Experience not essential. Exclusive territory, and active co-operation given to hustlers. Excellent openings and liberal terms for agents, collectors and district managers. Address, at once, Dept 78, Continental Casualty Co., Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS, CREDIT, Perfumes, Flavors, etc. Big profits. Express Paid. Terms Free. HERBENE AGENCY Co., Box 282, Sta'n L, New York

AGENTS WANTED to sell the Celebrated Morris TRANSPARENT HANDLE POCKET KNIVES. Write for Terms. Morris Cutlery Co., P.O. Box A, Morris, Ill

"NO BURN" KETTLE BOT[illegible] to Agents. Wonderful Seller, try it. Postage 6c. STAMPING CO., ANDOVER, N.Y.

SELL TOBACCO AND CIGARS. Locally or traveling. Salary or commission. Full time or side line. Steady work. Good pay. Promotion. Address MOROTOCK TOBACCO WORKS, Box T 13, DANVILLE, VA.

AGENTS PORTRAITS 35c, FRAMES 15c, sheet pictures 1c, stereoscopes 25c, views 1c. 30 days credit. Samples & Catalog Free. Consolidated Portrait Co., 290—30 W. Adams St., Chicago.

AGENTS $50. Per WEEK WANTED To sell the Dr. Haux famous "Perfect Vision" spectacles—finest on earth. State present occupation. Dr. Haux Spectacle Co., Dept. 11, St. Louis.

WE WANT AGENTS

in every town to take orders for Custom-made Suits and Overcoats from $11.00 up, and Trousers from $3.50 up. Big commissions paid and large Sample Outfit in traveling case furnished free to those who can do business. You can make big money working for us. Write at once for Sample Outfit. The Warrington W. & W. Mills, Dept. 50, 178 Adams St., Chicago.

LOTS of MAIL

Would you like to get a lot of letters, circulars and packages? If so, read this advertisement very carefully. You probably know that manufacturers, supply houses, wholesalers and publishers buy names and addresses for the purpose of sending samples, advertising matter, papers and circulars to. Good names and addresses are hard to get and are quite expensive. We publish an Agent's Directory List containing names and addresses carefully arranged in alphabetical order. We send these Directory Lists to concerns we know are anxious for good names to send advertising matter to. The cost of arranging these names in suitable shape and taking care of them is considerable yet we only ask 10 cents in silver for our trouble. Write your name very plainly so the printer will not make a mistake; be sure to give your street number and town also plainly written so that any mail addressed to you will reach you without fail. Simply enclose 10 cents with your name and address as above stated saying you wish your name inserted in our Agent's Directory List and we will insert it in the next Directory which we are now preparing.

AGENT'S DIRECTORY LIST, INDIANA, Indiana County, PENNA.

MAGIC BILL BOOK!

An entertaining and useful article. Can be used as any ordinary pocket book. Sample by mail 15c AGENTS WANTED.

W. C. WATKINS & CO., Box 1505, Pittsburg, Pa.

When answering advertisements you will favor the advertiser and the publishers by mentioning The Chicago Ledger.

THE DEATH-KEY MYSTERY;

OR, A GREAT DETECTIVE'S RUSE. BY J. BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS.

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Begun in No. 25, June 22. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XVI.

There was a moment of intense silence. Then Phil Deedum stammered, "What do you say? It is impossible that my wife should be here."

"She is in yonder shrubbery," said Keeneyes confidently. "We have but to retrace our steps around the corner of the house for her to see us. But she mustn't see us. She must think we are gone."

"If she is really in the shrubbery," said the other, trembling, "I will go to her and lead her back into the house."

"No," said Keeneyes quickly, "do nothing of the sort. If she sees you coming she will dart away and escape us. Let us wait here."

"For what are we to wait?"

"Presently, when she is convinced that we are gone she will slip up to the nurse's door. She will attempt to force an entrance in order to get her child. While she is doing so we can overpower her."

"But," said the husband, "I need no one to help me recover her. She doesn't have to be overpowered. I can control her."

"Remember, Mr. Deedum," Keeneyes warned him, "that after her wild leap through space to the tree, and her subsequent hiding and waiting, she is in a condition such as you never found her before. She is not to be controlled now except by force, and by unusual force at that."

"Yes, Mr. Deedum," said Moore, feeling that for once Keeneyes was in the right, "let us hide here and await developments."

"Gentlemen," said Phil Deedum with resolution, "I thank you for your evidently kind motives in seeking to detain me. But I shall act as seems best to me." So saying he walked rapidly around the house. [illegible]d Jansen Moore kept close [illegible]

[illegible]gle of the building brought [illegible] view of the shrubbery, the g[illegible]hat stretched out like a vel[illegible]e shrubbery, and the nurse's [illegible]light showing dimly through [illegible]y above.

[illegible] the black shadow of the sh[illegible] a woman with the moonli[illegible] her face. She was tall and th[illegible]b had been advanced far be[illegible] as she slowly drew up her oth[illegible] was something indescribabl[illegible] sinister in her movement. Both arms were crooked forward as if she were carrying a long object upon her breast but in her embrace was nothing. Her long hair streamed over the black dress that marked off the ghastly whiteness of her face and neck.

When she had drawn up her other foot, she stood still listening. Then she slowly began to glide forward, like a tiger slinking with coward softness and cruel grace upon a sleeping victim. She made a long stride, with no more noise than the leaves made, hanging silvered in the air.

Phil Deedum started forward, crying in a voice that sounded like a wail, "Winnie! Winnie come with me."

The woman stood with a quick twist of her head and looked back at her husband from over her motionless shoulder. She watched him curiously.

"Come, Winnie," said the other, advancing toward her.

The woman threw up her arms and gave a backward leap. Then she wheeled about and went crashing into the shrubbery.

Keeneyes ran to the gate.

The boy was waiting, but his eyes were rolling in terror.

"Which way did she go, Sam?" Keeneyes asked quickly.

The boy could not speak. His shaking hand pointed across the road to the old barn.

Keeneyes without waiting for a word, dashed across the street. He was followed by Deedum and Moore.

The barn door stood open.

Also the door on the opposite side was open.

Apparently the fugitive had sped through the building. However, she might be in the loft.

"Moore," said Keeneyes hastily, "hurry to examine the loft while I proceed."

"No barnloft for me!" said Jansen Moore resolutely; "I've had one experience in a barnloft during this mystery case."

"What mystery case do you mean?" asked Phil Deedum looking at him with sudden and concentrated attention.

"We have no time now for discussion," said Keeneyes hurriedly. "Mr. Deedum, you know your wife's habits and motives—can she have had any reason for coming through this barn?"

"The boat key!" Phil Deedum exclaimed, running to the side of the stall and feeling along the wall. "It is gone."

"The key to your private skiff?"

"Yes—she has taken it."

"Lead us to the landing," said Keeneyes. "Quick!"

His tone was one of command, but Phil Deedum needed no coercion. He set off at utmost speed and they went after him over a field soaking with dew. Paying no attention to fences and seeking no path, Phil Deedum at last brought the others to the shore of the lake. He leaped down the embankment upon a narrow pier.

"The boat is gone!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Keeneyes, pointing across the water; "look, is that it?"

A skiff was speeding across the moonlit waters, propelled by a lonely figure—that of Phil Deedum's wife. Otherwise the lake appeared deserted.

"Oh," groaned Deedum, "where are all the search-parties?"

"Looking where there is nothing to find, of course," said Keeneyes. "Come, come, we must find another boat and follow."

"I fear all are gone over to the swamp," responded Deedum in despair.

"Then call to her," cried Keeneyes. "Perhaps she will come back. It is a chance worth trying, at any events."

"Winnie!" called her husband, "Winnie, come back. Won't you come back? We are not going to harm you. Don't you know me—I am Phil. Don't you remember me?"

The rower had ceased rowing and the boat was rocking gently upon the surface of the lake.

"Good!" muttered Jansen Moore. "Look, she is coming back, as I live."

The demented wife stood up in the boat.

"Oh!" groaned Phil Deedum, "she has dropped one of her oars."

"No," said Keeneyes, "she threw it away. Now she is going to throw the other one overboard."

There came to them a faint splash, and two oars floated away from the boat, gleaming like long silver bars.

Keeneyes began rapidly to take off his coat and vest.

"What are you going to do, Mr. Zellers?" asked Moore anxiously.

The detective did not reply, but hastily unlaced and removed his shoes.

Suddenly there came from over the water a frightful scream. It had been uttered by Phil Deedum's wife.

She stood in the boat, pointing at the oars in a frenzy of terror. The twist of the water around the stern of the boat had sent them together, so that the end of one crossed the middle of the other, holding part of it under water out of sight. The woman, quivering from head to foot, shrieked, "Look, Phil, look, look!"

Phil Deedum wrung his hands in agony. He called, "That is nothing Winnie, nothing but the oars, nothing but the oars!"

"Look, Phil, look," shrieked the other in mad persistence; "the iron key! the iron key!"

Jansen Moore, without knowing why, was thrilled with inexpressible terror. The conjunction of the oars certainly caused them to resemble a great key, which the moonlight painted a dazzling white. He remembered how often Keeneyes had declared that the iron key was the key to the mystery. There seemed to his mind something supernaturally gruesome in the fanciful resemblance of the oars to a key.

Phil Deedum clasped his head in his hands and uttered a hollow groan.

"The key!" shrieked the woman. "The key, the iron key! The death-key! the death-key. My husband—not you, not you, Phil—my husband, the dead one. He calls me. There is his key. He is unlocking the grave for me. God-by, Phil, forever, forever, forever——"

She leaped from the boat.

Phil Deedum could not swim. He stood helpless, wild-eyed and deathly pale as Keeneyes plunged into the water.

He and Jansen Moore watched the detective striking out boldly toward the boat. It was a far stretch, but not too far to test the power of a good swimmer.

Keeneyes at last reached the boat. It still rocked from the impetus the frenzied woman had given it. He threw his arm over one side, and thus resting himself, watched the surface of the water. He had been surprised that she had not come up into sight. By this time, she should have made at least two ascensions. Indeed, he had hardly hoped to rescue aught save the corpse of the woman.

Far away, idly floated the oars, still interlocked in the form of a great key. It must be that the body was not coming to the surface.

Keeneyes drew a long breath and dived at a venture. It was mere guess work, since he could not know how far the boat had floated from the spot of the disappearance.

The lake was in no place excessively deep, and in a short time the detective reached the bottom. He groped along the depths, feeling his arms among tangled masses of water grasses.

When he could stay down no longer, he shot upward, and finding the boat, clung to it, while he called, "Has she come up?"

Jansen Moore called back, "No."

Keeneyes panted heavily until he had regained his steady breath, then swam back from the boat a good distance, and again dived downward, dropping in a slanting course.

This time he was more successful.

He had not reached the bottom, when his groping hand touched a swaying foot.

He felt his way down the body to the hair which hung from the head like matted seaweed.

He traced from her shoulder to her hand.

Her hand gripped a root securely fastened in the earth. That was why she had not come up to the surface.

Keeneyes sought to unclasp her fingers, but it was impossible. It was a dead hand, but it clung to its mooring as if each little finger had been a ring of steel.

Keeneyes felt a pain at his ears and nostrils. He had already been under water too long. He felt an almost insuperable yearning to open his mouth and gasp, though it be the gasp of death. But he locked his teeth together with grim resolution.

He drew his knife from his pocket and hacked at the root. It was tough and resisted his efforts. It seemed to him that he must swim up to the air, or burst some blood vessel in his head. Then it seemed that already it was too late to ascend. The drums of his ears seemed pressing in; his nostrils stung as if touched with fire. Still he hacked at the root that held the dead woman to the bottom of the lake.

CHAPTER XVII.

The scene of the tragedy was about a mile above the main town of Everglade. Phil Deedum's private boat landing was along a strip of meadow and flowering woodland, such as one sees everywhere in Florida.

Even the boat idly drifting far out upon the lake had not been discovered by the townsfolk, because the bands of searchers had scattered throughout the country, or had already crossed the lake to the farther side. Hence, the disappearance of the insane woman, and later, the vanishment of Keeneyes below the surface of the water had been seen only by the woman's husband and the detective's friend.

As we have said, Phil Deedum could not swim, and though agonized by his wife's disappearance almost to distraction, he was compelled to wait helplessly upon the shore.

Jansen Moore, however, could swim. He had not at once plunged into the water when the woman leaped from the boat, because he had believed Keeneyes competent to the task of restoring her body to the skiff. Jansen Moore did not intend to give himself and his garments a bath unless it were absolutely necessary.

However, when he saw Keeneyes come up without the body, and cling to the boat evidently with the intention of diving again, Jansen Moore saw or thought he saw that his services would be needed. He accordingly cast off unnecessary garments and leaped into the water without further hesitation. All the time he was swimming toward the boat, he was expecting Keeneyes to come up to the surface with the corpse. But he finally reached the boat, and still the detective remained in the depths of the lake.

The young man was thoroughly alarmed, and swimming as near as he could judge to the place of Keeneyes' last plunge, he sustained himself anxiously upon the surface, waiting.

Suddenly something from below struck him, and reaching down his hand he felt the hair of a man's head. It was no doubt Keeneyes.

Jansen Moore drew the head above water and found that Keeneyes was weighted down by another body.

"You must let go of her," panted Jansen Moore.

Keeneyes made no reply; he was unconscious, perhaps quite drowned.

Moore sought desperately to loosen Keeneyes' grasp on the garments of the lifeless woman, but the attempt was useless and a good deal of his own much-needed strength was squandered in the attempt.

The only thing possible under the circumstances was to get Keeneyes, hampered as he was, to the boat, and while Jansen Moore was making frantic efforts to succeed in this, he was relieved to hear Keeneyes gurgle and gasp, thus proving that the spark of life still burned, however damp the surroundings.

As he reached the boat, almost exhausted and quite bewildered over the apparently hopelessness of lifting the two bodies into the boat, Keeneyes opened his eyes.

"Here!" said Jansen Moore in relief, "can you cling to the side of the boat while I get in?"

Keeneyes began to pant and heave violently, and presently grew calmer. "All right," he said weakly.

"Let go of her," said Moore, "or she'll pull you under."

"I shall not let go," said Keeneyes faintly.

"I can't get you in while you hold her, Mr. Zellers."

Keeneyes did not reply at once, but while he was silent he was regaining his strength. Jansen Moore crawled into the boat, almost capsizing it in the feat. He grasped Keeneyes' arm.

"Take hold of her," said Keeneyes, "and bend down on the far side with her under the water to counterbalance my weight. And then you just wait. I'll be all right in a few minutes."

It was not very long after that when Keeneyes climbed aboard, and the corpse was placed in the bottom of the boat. Jansen Moore covered her face with the dark, clammy hair, that its horrible expression might not be seen.

He was still pretty weak, and his climb had rendered him almost speechless.

Phil Deedum from the shore had seen everything. He realized that his wife was dead, and although her insanity had, in a way, some weeks since put an end to her real life, still there had been the hope of a recovery. He called to the men, "Shall I go to town for another boat?"

"It is not worth while," Jansen Moore called back; "when we have rested a little I will swim out and recover the oars. I can do that before you could get another boat here."

"Yes," said Keeneyes, "that is best."

Moore said to Keeneyes, "You were pretty near gone that time, Mr. Zellers."

"You have saved my life," said Keeneyes, rather begrudgingly, "but as I once saved you, we need say no more about that."

"Certainly," said Jansen Moore. "I had better try to get those oars now."

It was some time later before the oars were in the rowlocks and Moore with his back toward Phil Deedum was propelling the boat homeward.

"Before we reach the land," said Keeneyes, "let us end our contest of skill, Moore. Now confess, do you know who killed old Boliver Bering?"

"I think I do."

"You think so, but you don't know?"

"I have no proof; only reasonable inferences."

"You think it was this woman in our boat?"

"I do. Of course I couldn't prove it. There is no clew."

"No clew, my dear fellow? No clew? Good Heavens! Was there no iron key?"

"There was an iron key in the picture of the kitchen floor," said Jansen Moore, "but what of it? Do you think Boliver Bering was killed by the key? If so, why wasn't it found in the parlor?"

"My poor friend, my well-meaning fellow," said Keeneyes rather irritably, still smarting under the obligation of owing his life to his companion, "you have passed the vital point with the eyes of a blind man and the tongue of the blind. You tell me the key was not found in the parlor. Why, Moore, where was it found?"

"The picture shows it was found in the

MORPHINE
PAINLESS HOME TREATMENT.

We will send any one addicted to Opium, Morphine, Laudanum, or other drug habit a free trial treatment of the most remarkable remedy ever discovered. Refractory cases solicited. Confidential correspondence invited from all, especially physicians.

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GOLD INITIAL CARD CASE
50 Tiffany Script Calling Cards
The STAR MONTHLY For SIX MONTHS

All Three for only 25 2-cent Stamps

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kitchen," said Moore with some spirit.

"True, it was on the kitchen floor when the snapshot was taken, but the key was really never found, was it? If so, who found it? What was done with it? Where is it now? Who ever saw it after the murder? My poor friend, that key vanished. Does it tell you nothing?"

"No, it doesn't. But I don't like to be called a 'poor friend.' I think I have shown myself rather a prosperous friend this night!"

Keeneyes swallowed hard, then said, "As soon as I have restored this corpse to Phil Deedum, we will go to the hotel where I will explain to you the entire mystery-case as I have deduced it from the clews long since in your own possession. When you have listened to the end, I shall ask you if it hangs together. If you still doubt, I will prove it by ocular demonstration. If you then admit I am right, you must admit yourself worsted in this matter of detecting crime. You are then to do anything I bid you do, according to our agreement."

"Very well," said Jansen Moore briefly.

As they drew near the shore, Jansen Moore remarked, "I was wondering how long a chapter in your autobiography you intended to devote to my saving of your life?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

The boat was brought safely to the landing-place.

The body of the unfortunate woman was lifted out and borne to a grassy knoll where the moonlight peacefully slumbered.

The husband and Jansen Moore remained to guard the body, while Keeneyes hurried away to bring assistance.

It was not long before the news that the missing woman had been found spread throughout Everglades. The tragedy of her death heightened popular interest and sympathy.

Keeneyes and Jansen Moore were among those who accompanied the wretched husband to his house of mourning. Phil Deedum sought to express to them his gratitude for their services, but they relieved him of that duty by expressing their gratitude at being enabled to recover the body.

The house behind the shrubbery was now thrown open and, although it was about four o'clock in the morning, the premises were thronged with sympathetic friends and curious acquaintances.

The nurse's room, which had hitherto been kept isolated from the rest of the house, was to be freely entered. There was no longer the fateful purpose of an insane mother to fear. Phil Deedum looked in upon his child before going to the front room where the body had been disposed.

"Let us look at the baby," said Keeneyes to Jansen Moore.

They entered the nursery.

The old black nurse had already heard that these were the men who had rescued her mistress' body from the bottom of the lake. She looked upon them as privileged guests.

"Fine child," said Keeneyes, bending down and scrutinizing the infant with the closest attention.

"Yas, sah," said the old woman, "yas, she is boss, po' lil' t'ing! Mighty fine chile, sah. What she gwine do wifout huh mammy? Nemmine, ole Marfy tek keer you!"

"Look, Moore," said Keeneyes. "See here; did you ever see a more promising start than this?"

"Let's go back to the hotel," said Jansen Moore hastily, as he brushed his hand nervously over his eyes. "I'm just half dead."

"'Tis mighty late," said the nurse sympathetically.

Keeneyes and Moore went away. Once when nearing the hotel, Moore spoke. "I don't know what's the matter with me. Seems like I'm sort of hypnotized."

"How so?" asked Keeneyes.

The other did not reply. They went up to their room. Jansen Moore fumbled at the lock and dropped the key. He caught his breath nervously. "Everything is a key," he said dully; I can't see anything else but keys."

"You're unstrung," said Keeneyes briskly. "Cheer up! Come in and we'll have a talk—unless you want to sleep."

"Sleep!" said Moore with a shiver. "I couldn't sleep. Yes, talk—talk all you want to. I wish this night was ended!"

They seated themselves in the bedroom. The electric light showed Jansen Moore's white face and drawn brow. Keeneyes looked alert and happy.

"Now, my dear fellow," said Keeneyes, extending his long legs before him, restfully locking his toes and clasping his hands behind his head, "I am about to tell you the mystery of Boliver Bering's death. It makes a charming story, and although it starts out in the most conventional manner, I make no apologies for that, when I consider how unusually is the termination.

"We have just come from viewing a white corpse with distorted face and rigid limbs. That corpse was once a bright, blooming girl, full of life and sunshine, gay in the girlish enjoyment of a girl's world, fond of good things, ease, comforts, luxuries, pleasures. Her name is Winnie Toppleton.

"Unfortunately she is very, very poor, and her poverty prevents her from mingling with the kind of people to whom she feels herself adapted. She is ambitious, but her wings are clipped. She is beautiful, also, very beautiful."

Jansen Moore roused himself and felt in his pocket for the rose Sopha Le Brune had given him. Keeneyes slightly frowned at this evidence of an erring attention, and continued:

"Naturally she was loved. Among her admirers was a handsome, noble-hearted young fellow named Phil Deedum. They were classmates. Phil was well-to-do and offered prospects of a comfortable home. Winnie loved him, and she loved the prospect of ease and social equality, which were a part of him. Phil's father went security for a man who proved dishonest. Phil's father died. Phil found himself overshadowed by a dark cloud. He must either pay off the debt or leave his father's name under that cloud. He manfully shouldered the debt.

"This left the prospect of a marriage with Winnie Toppleton far in the rear. My metaphor is ill-advised. I should say it pushed the hope of a marriage far into the future. Winnie was overwhelmed with sorrow, not only because she loved Phil, but because she hated her straightened circumstances. Just about this time along comes our old gentleman, Mr. Boliver Bering. Our old gentleman is a childless widower. He desires a lady partner to share the blaze of his hearthside. Winnie is young and beautiful and strong, just such a child as an old gentleman would naturally select as a suitable cherisher of his ancient ills.

He proposes. We may suppose that Winnie hesitates and weighs Phil against Boliver, years of painful waiting, against the ready-made fortune. But hesitation or no hesitation, the result we know. She marries our old gentleman. Thereupon Phil Deedum goes to Australia and for several years lives in the brush, isolated, miserable, savage, but money-making.

"He pays off his father's ill-contracted debt. All this time the image of Winnie has danced before him. He has avoided other women, and no face has had an opportunity to make a composite picture with Winnie's likeness on his heart."

Keeneyes stopped abruptly and drew his fountain pen from his pocket.

"Well?" said Jansen Moore impatiently.

"I'm going to write down that idea before it slips from my mind," said Keeneyes. "It's a god one and it came so unexpectedly I'm afraid I'll lose it. I say that no face has had a chance to form a composite picture, by overlaying itself upon the lineaments which are already engraved upon the tablet of his memory. Ha! To resume:

"Phil Deedum decides at last to revisit Fenceville, his native city, not that he cares about the city, but he hopes to catch a glimpse of Winnie, perhaps even to speak to her, perhaps even clasp her hand once more."

Jansen Moore held his rose to his nostrils and said, "I understand. Poor fellow!"

"Just so," said Keeneyes; good. Excellent. So he comes back to Fenceville and we are upon the eve of the tragedy. What I am about to tell you is partly surmise, partly knowledge, but all reasonable inferences. It is Phil Deedum's plan to avoid recognition, if possible; he will slip out to the farmhouse, fleet as a ghost into Winnie's life and out again. But although he believes he has escaped recognition, he is mistaken. One person has seen him. It is our old gentleman, Boliver Bering."

"Ah!" Jansen Moore exclaimed.

"Just so," returned Keeneyes, "you may well say it. Boliver Bering hastens home, mad with jealousy. The fact is his married life with Winnie has not been entirely smooth. He knows Winnie loved Phil—perhaps he has taxed her with the fact since marrige; perhaps she has taunted him with the fact. Perhaps she says that she still loves Phil Deedum.

He comes blustering into the kitchen, our old gentleman. Winnie is there.

"He tells his young wife that he has seen Phil Deedum get off the train. Winnie is speechless with amazement, and with more than that. Yes, in the first flash of the news her face is suffused with joy. It is the impulsive rejoicing over the nearness of a beloved soul. Very good. How was that put, Moore? She really loves Phil. And for a second, forgetting that his love [illegible] hers, her eyes shine like stars."

"Yes," said Moore. He inhaled his faded flower.

"Very good. Our old gentleman sees her unmistakable rapture. It is too much for him. He is boiling over with fury. He is sure Phil will come into Winnie's life again, but he suspects he will not come as a ghost; rather as a handsome, self-reliant, flesh-and-blood young man. Gleam our old gentleman's teeth ever so faultlessly, he knows that Winnie sees them in the mug every night; he is at a physical disadvantage. Cruel age has hobbled him, while to Phil's feet it has fastened the wings of youth. Wait. I will write that down, too."

Keeneyes suppressed his thought and pursued the story which he was enjoying with the relish of a gourmand brings to a French dinner.

"There is a violent quarrel. I think our old gentleman offers physical violence to his wife. Perhaps he strikes her. Perhaps he only threatens to do so. At any rate, there chances to be an iron key, a large iron key—within reach of Winnie's hand. It belongs down to the barn. You ask how came it there? No matter; it is there; and Winnie in desperation, or fear, or anger, or retaliation, or not knowing what she does, or not intending to do anything—mark you, Moore, the motive does not concern us—she, I say, casts the big key wildly. By chance it goes straight at the old man's head, by chance it deals him a vital blow upon the temple. It is such a blow, and such a result as neither Winnie nor you, nor I might have accomplished in ten thousand attempts, wilful and painstaking as we might be. But the deed is done. There lies our old gentleman dead upon the kitchen floor, the iron key, the death-key, beside him. Thus Winnie has killed her husband. She hears a footstep outside.

"What shall she do? This is murder; serious business, indeed. Good. Excellent.

"She darts into the hall and crouches there, half-distracted, not sure that Boliver Bering is dead—telling herself it is impossible that so slight a blow and so small an object could have killed him—hoping, yet afraid, horribly afraid.

"The kitchen door is standing open as our blustering old gentleman left it when he stormed in. Poor old gentleman, you won't bluster ever again, eh? Phil Deedum, who has slipped out from town almost as soon as our old gentleman stormed out, enters the room, not having caught a fleeting glimpse of Winnie as she fled to the hall. You say, why does he enter his rival's house by the kitchen door, uninvited? I answer, he had no intention of coming in, but he had circled to the rear hoping for a glimpse of Winnie. He has heard wild altercation—the accusing voice of the old husband, the shrill denial or defiance of the young wife. He has hurried to a possible rescue. He has heard a heavy fall. He leaps to the door—sees not Winnie vanishing—but beholds the corpse upon the floor.

"What shall he do" Here is a dead man And mark you friend, his former rival, the husband of his only love; dead, you understand, at his very feet. What has become of the woman whose voice he has heard in quarrel? She is not visible. Now that I muse deeper, I suspect he did not hear any quarrel. Perhaps he does not even suspect who has done the deed. No matter. His part is to hasten to the nearest neighbor and tell the news. He does so. Exit Phil Deedum.

"Here we have the wife, again left alone in the ghastly farmhouse with the corpse of her husband—Boliver Bering slain by her own hand. She, from her hiding-place, has seen Phil Deedum enter and depart. How little had she ever thought of seeing him again under such circumstances. It must have been that oftentimes, perhaps in the balmy night, the image of him had laid its cool hand upon the fever of her dreams."

"Yes, yes," said Moore impatiently. "Please proceed, Mr. Zellers, you are interesting me greatly."

"Thank you. And I will save my poetry for poets. Well, what shall she do? She must not be found with the body. The instinct of self-preservation stands out like a rugged promontory above the frenzied chaos of her giddy wildness. The corpse has been seen in the kitchen. She will drag it to the parlor, and swear she found it in the parlor. Why? This will confuse the evidence. To what purpose? My dear friend, she has no fixed, no rational purpose, except to make things seem other than they are. She fancies that the least alteration of the true facts will be a gain. You say this is not reasonable. My dear fellow, I admit it. But is this young wife reasonable? Mark you now, why so many murderers escape detection at the Beginning of their guilty careers. It is not because they act with consummate wisdom. It is because they act wildly, foolishly, and the human intellect, moving logically, cannot follow them through their senseless windings. The majority of great crimes come to light from some irrational word or act of the criminal. Perhaps God lays a finger upon the brain and checks the throb of thought.

"You will remember, then, that Winnie runs to the neighbors with the tale that she left the corpse in the parlor. You will remember that I showed you by the picture how she had disarranged the piano stool in dragging the old man. You will remember that Phil Deedum's walking-stick was found in the kitchen, where the corpse was not found, that he was tried; that he could not be convicted; that Winnie found herself a young widow, with all the old man's estate deeded to her.

"Why did she refuse to take that property? You will now see it was from the revolt of conscience. Why did she wait three years before marrying Phil Deedum. That you will comprehend. Why was the iron key, the death-dealing key, never found? Because as soon as she could recover it Winnie hid it—buried it—cast it into the well or pond—did something with it that insured its secrecy. That is why I was so pleased when I could not find it. The more I searched and the less prospect there was of finding it, the more certain I was that it had been most carefully buried from human eyes. There are very few things hidden that I cannot find. But I couldn't find that key.

"But, you will say, why was she so painstaking in finding a safe hiding place for that key? The key could tell no story, you will say. It looked harmless; it could not betray the murderer. But when you say that—"

"I don't say that," Jansen Moore interposed.

"When you say that," Keeneyes persisted, "I show you are devoid of proper imagination and intuition. That key preyed upon Winnie's mind. It symbolized her guilt. Whenever she thought of her dead husband, she thought of the key. By every means in her power she sought to drive Boliver Bering's memory from her mind, but the key would not be banished. It was too intimately connected with the one hideous act of her life. She had perhaps hardly been conscious of the existence of that key, certainly not in a manner to differentiate it from its class, before she hurled it at her husband. But from then on it formed a fatal background to all her emotions. She dreamed of it. She saw it dangling before her like Macbeth's dagger. Whenever she saw a key it reminded her of the hidden key, and turn where she might, she was always seeing keys. There were always doors before her. And whenever she saw a door, she looked for the key. And if there was no key in the lock, she wondered if some guilty hand had hidden it as the death-key had been hidden. And if there was a key, she compared it to the key of death.

"She married Phil Deedum. She had told him the story long ago, but he had exonerated her. He had tried to persuade her that her act had been done in self-defense. She tried to believe it. She loved Phil, he

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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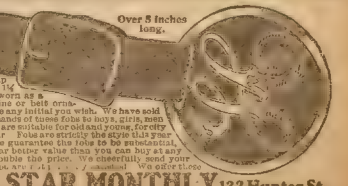

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CHAPTER XVII.

CIRCUS TRAINING.

Bob in glancing out had seen a vehicle just passing down the driveway.

The occupants were beyond the range of his vision, but it was not hard for him to guess their identity.

Satisfied that the [illegible] was [illegible] way to defeat him, he aroused himself to action.

The door was locked.

One jerk at it proved this to his satisfaction and he wasted no more time in endeavoring to effect a passage there.

The window remained.

Through that he could gain what he sought.

True, is was some little distance above the ground, which sloped away at this side of the house.

What of that?

He was a trained athlete, and had spent years of his young life in the arena of the circus, astonishing vast audiences with marvelous feats of agility.

This then was a mere bagatelle to a young fellow of his varied accomplishments that he could afford to snap his fingers at the difficulties it might have presented.

Through that window he went with the impetuosity that distinguishes the leap of the bareback rider when the paper covered hoop is presented before him.

Why, this was a mere frolic—with such vines to guide and sustain him Bob could have easily descended from the top of the highest skyscraper in the city of Chicago.

He was on the ground in almost no time.

Then he ran around the corner of the house and saw the vehicle just passing out of the gate.

The Squire was in view, standing up and holding a whip in his hand, as though he meant to lay it on his horse with right good will.

Few people knew horses better than Bob, since so many years of his life had been spent among them.

He saw at a glance that the animal driven by the red faced Squire was no inferior quadruped.

Muscroft was a lover of fine horseflesh whatever his other faults might be.

In a race, Bob knew he would be badly left.

A boy, no matter what style of sprinter he may be, is no match for a good horse.

Still, in his lack of knowing what else to do under the existing circumstances Bob had made a start in the direction of the gate, when he came to a sudden pause.

A sound had reached his ears.

It was the shrill neigh of a horse, and came from the direction of the barn near at hand.

Bob's plans immediately changed.

Here was a chance to catch up with the fugitive.

If he kept one good horse, the chances were he had more.

Turning instantly Bob made a bee line for the stables.

It seemed a queer method of overtaking the Squire, this heading away from him, but sometimes the longest road around is the quickest way to the fire.

He reached the stable.

The door stood open.

Some one was whistling merrily within as though paid for the tune by the yard.

As Bob dashed inside he appeared before the gaze of a darky, who immediately lost his head.

Again Bob's excited appearance brought fear and dismay.

"Throw a saddle on that horse, quick!" was his immediate demand, as he snatched a bridle from a peg.

Again his familiarity with horses came into good play, for he put the bridle on before the scared African could stir his stumps, or coax his knees from knocking together.

"The saddle!" he roared, remembering how every second of time counted.

The negro almost fell down in deadly fear.

"It's gittin' fixed in town—'deed it am, sah. If I had knowed you was comin'—"

But impetuous Bob had no time to waste in hearing explanations.

He led the horse outside.

It was a spirited animal, but the party who clutched the bridle was a born horseman.

Seeing a riding whip hanging on a peg Bob took possession of it.

Once outside he mounted.

There was no need of a stirrup with him—he clutched the horse's mane, laid his other hand on the crupper, made a vault, and presto, sat upon the animal's back like a centaur.

The beast, finding a stranger in charge began to show some spunk.

Slash came the whip—slash, slash, and after a frenzied tussle of ten seconds the horse realizing that a master hand gripped the bridle, shot down the drive like an arrow.

Bob felt like giving a Comanche war whoop, and did wave his hat in the direction of the stable, in the doorway of which the darky stood, holding up both hands in amazement.

Through the grounds he went like a meteor.

A shriek from the porch told him the maid servant had witnessed his flight, and was amazed to see the party whom she had locked so securely in the widow's chamber speeding past, and riding one of the Squire's horses bareback, like an Indian of the Wild West show.

Now the gate.

It had shut after the departure of the Squire, as his carriage wheel knocked away the support that kept it open.

Bob had faith in his steed.

What was he good for, anyway, if not able to leap that low barrier?

He put him at it.

The horse had racing blood in his veins, and was enthused by the spirit of the bold rider who bestrode him.

Over he went.

"Well done!" cried Bob, patting his neck, and the intelligent animal gave a whinny as though in acknowledgment of the praise.

Then down the road they rushed in a perfect whirlwind of dust.

The Squire had the start, but when backed by such an enthusiastic rider the pursuing animal was sure to overtake him.

Then would come the reckoning.

Bob's spirit rose again—indeed, mounted on such a swift moving animal it would be hard for any one to keep from exhilaration, for the feeling was in the air.

He made a turn in the road.

It was not so dusty here, and trees bordered the drive on either side.

The road too, instead of winding kept on in a straight line for a mile.

Evidently Squire Muscroft was not heading for town, else he would have taken another route.

When Bob saw the vehicle he was chasing down the road, he leaned forward and urged his blooded charger to do his prettiest.

There was no need of whip or spur.

The horse seemed to understand the situation and put forth every effort to win.

From the very start he gained, and it soon became evident that unless something entirely unlooked for came to pass he must overtake the Squire ere another mile was left behind.

What then?

Perhaps the Squire had armed himself—indeed, it was just as likely as not, and when he found himself facing his outraged nephew he might be tempted to do something desperate.

This brought something to Bob's mind.

He had come along this road after leaving the marshal tied to a tree, though the spot where this little event had taken place was on another road that branched from the main one.

Sure enough, and there, ahead on the left was the identical stump behind which he had tossed the marshal's revolver, not caring to be armed when he went back to face his uncle and his mother again.

Now his mind changed—perhaps the excitement of the last half hour caused him to see things in a different light.

He reined in his horse at the stump and leaped to the ground, holding the bridle.

The weapon lay where he had tossed it and it was with some degree of satisfaction that Bob possessed himself of it again.

Once more he thundered down the road, feeling like a knight of old in charging the enemy to rescue a captive.

Bob's chances seemed good.

When he had reduced the distance to one-half, the first consciousness of his coming seemed to dawn upon the mind of the Squire.

He stood up in his vehicle and looked over the top. As his eyes fell upon the figure of the wild horseman so diligently pursuing he doubtless experienced new alarm, for still standing he began to ply the whip upon his already speeding horse.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DUEL ON THE ROAD.

It was an exciting scene.

Bob had no fear of not overtaking those who were in front of him, since he lessened the distance with the passage of each minute.

Now and then he lost sight of the vehicle in the cloud of dust that arose, but did not lessen his pace on this account.

It was really a wonder the red-faced man who lashed his horse so vigorously in the advance did not have a stroke of apoplexy, such was the intense excitement under which he labored.

Evening was creeping along.

In some places where the road was bordered on either side with trees, the shadows became quite noticeable.

Knowing the tricks by means of which an experienced horseman can urge an animal on to do his level best, Bob soon found himself coming up on the object of his pursuit, hand over hand.

The Squire had ceased beating his steed.

This was not because he had any merciful feeling for the beast.

He realized that it did no good, and was brushing the cobwebs from his brain in the endeavor to discover some other plan by means of which he could outwit the determined youth who followed so like a hurricane.

Under the existing circumstances Bob was not at all surprised to see the other suddenly whirl his vehicle to one side and come to a full stop.

He was desperate.

Being armed, no doubt he would turn upon the young fellow.

A rich man has a power when it comes to the courts of law, that enables him to carry matters with a high hand.

It is a lamentable fact, but true, and Bob was not unacquainted with it.

At the same time being strengthened by the fact that it was a holy cause for which he fought, he would not allow any possible danger to interfere with the business in hand.

At the same time, finding that the pursuit was now over, since his enemy had been driven to bay, Bob slackened his pace.

He had only dislike for the ruddy faced man whose vaulting ambition had been the cause of woe to others—at the same time he gave him credit for both ingenuity and daring.

Possibly the man would like to put a bullet into him—not kill him, but end the affair by crippling his fierce antagonist.

It would take a pretty serious wound to disable Bob, bent upon clearing up the mystery of his life, and perhaps he could be doing something while all this was going on, seeing that he carried a shooting iron.

"Stop there, you young rascal!"

The Squire stood up in the vehicle, towering over the lowered top.

He was aiming something in the direction of the boy, and Bob felt a queer feeling go over him as he realized what this was.

As he still advanced, there was a flash and a report, accompanied by a scream, but this latter came in a woman's voice.

Bob heard the bullet whistle past his head in unpleasant proximity to his ears.

He did not believe that the Squire meant to shoot him down—at least not yet.

Still, a revolver in the hand of an excited man is something not to be trusted—even a fool can pull a trigger, and a bullet sent at random, if chance directs it to the mark will do as much execution as one sent by a sharpshooter.

The cry of alarm he was sure came from the poor lady he now knew to be his mother, although few proofs had as yet been brought up on either side to substantiate this conviction.

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There was some sort of commotion in the other vehicle.

Then a woman sprang out, ran a little way and stopped.

She was immediately followed by a second, and Bob, remembering that she seldom went any place without the attendant, knew this must be the woman who served as a companion and keeper.

Their removal from the carriage relieved him of one burden—he could meet the Squire on his own terms now.

Instead of halting Bob continued to advance.

He played a game learned in the ring, and made his horse rear and prance, as though the beast chose to do it of his own account.

"Keep away!" roared the man at bay, realizing that his enemy was drawing nearer.

Bob continued his evolutions, and yet it might have been noticed that he generally managed to keep the horse between himself and the weapon which waved above the carriage.

The Squire was in a stew—to fire upon his enemy might bring trouble, for the horse he had recognized as his own property.

Still, unless something was done there must come a speedy collision.

He tried another shot past the head of the boy.

"Get out, you young horsethief—leave us in peace, or I shall feel justified in shooting you down in your tracks," he shouted.

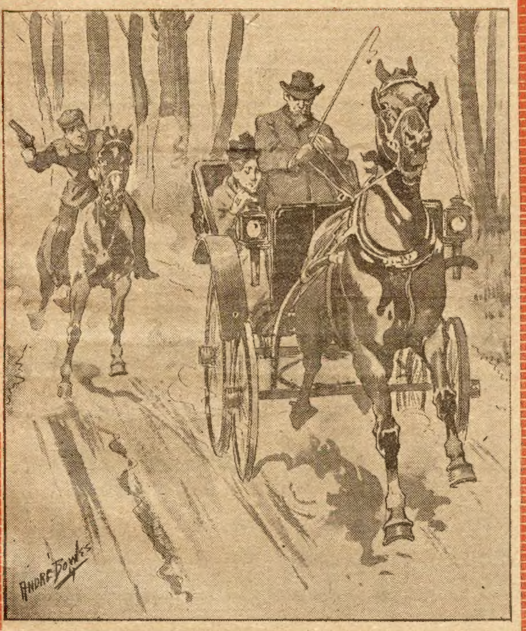
"Two can play at that game you old villain. I'm here to have your life—to settle accounts. Ah! there, look out," and as the prancing steed continued to curvet around, Bob opened fire on the man at bay in the carriage.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SQUIRE MEETS HIS WATERLOO.

The Squire was no war-seasoned veteran.

He knew how to shoot, but that is after all the smallest part of the business.



It was an exciting scene.

When Bob opened fire upon him, and he was brought face to face with the possibility of meeting a sudden and inglorious end, his rage turned to arrant cowardice.

While his face had glowed with anger before, it was now as white as a sheet.

That is usually the way with such bullies—so long as they hold the upper hand they carry steam until the safety-valve seems in danger; but once let the battle turn the other way, and the fires go out, producing a cold chill.

He had hoped and expected to frighten the young fellow by a show of anger, and the fact of his being armed.

Bob was not that kind of a youth.

It took something more than a savage front, to send a spasm of alarm to his heart.

When he opened fire upon his uncle, it was not with the intention of doing him personal injury, unless by accident.

It was Greek against Greek.

A poor rule it must be that refuses to work both ways, and Bob was simply dealing out the same medicine which the Squire had started.

The scene was one of considerable commotion for the next minute.

Then Bob gained the side of the vehicle.

The firing had ceased.

Looking in he saw the stout Squire cowering there, the picture of baffled hate and misery.

The horse attached to the vehicle had done some tall prancing while all this was going on, but having been driven into a fence corner, could not do any damage.

Bob was a little alarmed.

He feared that he might have done the other a more serious injury than he intended.

"Are you badly hurt?" he demanded.

"You've shot me down on the highway while defending women. You'll be hung for it, you rascal," groaned the other.

"I believe you're more frightened than hurt. Suppose you come out of that and let me see."

"Never," defiantly.

"We'll see about that," returned Bob, once more bringing the marshal's weapon into view, and scowling so fiercely that the other wilted.

"Hold on there—I might as well give up. When they hang you my hour will come."

So the stout Squire got out of the vehicle with many a groan.

Bob looked him over.

He could see where a bullet had just cut the lower end of his left ear in flying past—it bled a little, and the sight of a little stain must have given the man the idea that a bullet had lodged in his brain.

"Wait until I'm done with you, and it's small chance you'll have to laugh at my funeral. There is a lady yonder whose story must be heard in court. The best lawyers in the land will back her case, and I don't doubt but that you'll have a chance to grow thin on prison diet."

Squire Muscroft trembled with rage, but he entertained a lively fear for this daring boy who had championed the cause of his mother.

He saw a horrid spectacle before his mind.

It was himself serving out a long sentence in the penitentiary.

The enormity of his crime stared him in the face.

So long as success was with him, he had not worried much about the matter, but with the prospect of defeat looming up, the future suddenly assumed an appearance quite demoralizing.

Once Bob got away from this Michigan town with his mother, he must give up the game.

Flight to Canada was easy, and even though he must leave most of his ill-gotten gains behind it was better than taking chances.

What was to be done must be accomplished before Bob departed.

Here, in this section the rich Squire had much influence, for many of the inhabitants were in his employ, one way or another, and his power was great.

Bob dismounted.

He deliberately fastened the horse's bridle to the fence, making as tight a knot as possible, for it was his intention that the Squire should have the exquisite pleasure of undoing this.

He meant to swap horses.

There is an old saying to the effect that it is dangerous to trade horses while crossing a stream, but this did not apply in the present case.

Bob saw the Squire's revolver in the vehicle.

With a toss he sent it flying into the middle of the bush alongside the road.

There would be no more danger from that source at least.

Next Bob backed the horse out of the fence corner.

"What're you going to do?" demanded the Squire.

"Borrow your vehicle to drive my mother to town."

"What will you do when you get there?"

Muscroft was uneasy.

Bob took advantage of the fact.

"I may put our case in charge of the best lawyer to be found, who will keep you at bay until I can wire my own lawyer to come on and open proceedings against you."

The Squire looked daggers at him, but all the same he was scared at the prospect.

"You—young—tiger—what do you know about the law?" he gasped.

"Enough to make you sweat—enough to send you to the pen for ten years. The day of retribution has come."

"You—you have no proof."

"Wait and see."

"They'll laugh at your story as ridiculous."

"Perhaps not when the case is handled by such an able lawyer as Judge Emory."

The Squire winced at the name.

"I can bring four well known doctors who will positively stake their reputation on the fact that yonder lady is not in her right mind."

"All the more reason under such circumstances why she should be in the charge of her son."

"Well, warning has no effect on you."

"Not an iota."

"Rush rashly on your fate."

"That's what I intend doing. To find my mother has been the one dream of my life. Toward such a consummation I have devoted all my thoughts and saved every dollar. Now that I have found her all the powers of earth shall not prevail to rob me of the one being on earth who loves me."

The Squire winced under his words, as if he felt how powerless must his machinations prove against such sublime determination.

Bob had no desire to hold any further talk with the author of his troubles.

He had been fixing the harness all this while, and now sprang into the vehicle.

The two women were far down the road, and Bob could see that one appeared to be urging the other on, though with some difficulty.

It was easy to comprehend that the Squire's minion meant to defeat the boy's plan by spiriting away the lady while the others conversed.

Bob uttered a cry of anger as he saw them vanish around a bend in the road.

"Get up," he cried, to the horse.

Immediately the animal started, leaving Muscroft standing there muttering threats, and working himself back to his old condition of furious rage.

Reaching the curve in the road Bob urged his horse around it.

The two women were not in sight.

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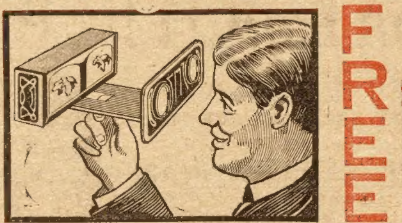

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CHAPTER XX.

PREPARING FOR FLIGHT.

He was not easily disheartened.

Glancing to the right and left he endeavored to discover something that would tell him which way they had gone.

Nor was he long in finding this.

His mother while yielding to the will of the companion who had so long domineered over her managed to leave a shawl she had worn, hanging upon the bushes.

Bob sprang out.

To fasten the horse took just about three seconds, only long enough to whip the lines about a pine tree growing conveniently near.

Then he sprang into the bushes.

The shades of night were gathering under the pines in force, and a subdued light made the trees look like grim specters.

As he advanced Bob called aloud:

"Mother, where are you?"

She could not be far away—the time given had been so short.

Eagerly he listened.

Was that a gurgling cry?

The awful thought came that perhaps in desperation and anger the woman in Squire Muscroft's employ might even use violence to keep the lady from answering his call.

As he bent his attention wholly toward the point from where he believed he heard that cry, he saw something move—something white that waved in the air for an instant, like a white flag of truce.

It was a handkerchief.

His mother was the one who signaled him.

Bob rushed impetuously through the bushes, regardless of every side issue, and only intent on rescuing his mother from the power of her unnatural brother.

Thus he came upon them.

Finding that all her efforts had resulted in failure, the woman stood back and folded her arms in a sullen way.

Had it not been for her sex she would have suffered by reason of Bob's anger.

He embraced his mother, and her cry of joy was more reward than he asked.

It would have been folly to remain there any length of time for explanations, when every minute was valuable.

Bob assisted his mother to the road.

When they were driving in the direction of the town, he felt his spirits rise.

There seemed some chance that success would come, since he had risen above all the trials thrown in his way.

Such dogged perseverance when pursuing the right, was bound to bring the desired end.

They rapidly approached the town.

Glancing back and around when the opportunity presented itself, he failed to see anything of his enemy.

Perhaps the Squire was still tugging away at the knot into which the bridle was twisted, or it might be he feared to trust his portly figure on a bareback horse.

Bob smiled at the idea.

It was in his favor at any rate.

Another thought came, and this time he raised his eyes to sweep the heavens.

It chanced that they were out of the pine woods at the time, and he had a good opportunity to make this survey.

It was not in vain.

To the south he saw, far up in the heavens, an object he at once recognized.

The rival balloon!

After all the professor and the senor were coming to join in the climax—it was like a gathering of buzzards at an expected feast.

Bob saw that the balloon was descending.

There was evidently a decided lack of breeze in the heights above, and the aeronauts were coming down in search of it, since they would land a mile or more away, as it was.

Bob saw he had to make close time if he hoped to succeed.

The Sky Wanderer was not in condition to make an ascent until Bob had entered a new supply of gas, compounded from his wonderful little bombs.

This would take time.

He urged the horse forward and all the while was speaking rapidly to his mother, upon whose face his eyes rested eagerly.

He told her how he had come there, and asked if she would dare venture with him in a balloon.

The answer thrilled him.

It was inspired by love.

"Anywhere—by any means, so that I am not separated from you, my boy. God has heard my prayer and sent me light out of darkness. I fear no danger with you; only let us fly from that bad man. And if it should be the will of Heaven that my baby might be returned to me too, I shall be the happiest woman on earth this night."

There was no signs of madness in her beaming, loving face.

Bob was happier than ever before in his life, and with such responsibility on his hands, felt capable of accomplishing wonders.

Now they entered the town.

Ordinarily, before sunset the fair grounds would have been practically deserted, but there was an attraction that held the people there.

Most of them had never seen a balloon before, and gaped at it in wonder.

Just at present their attention was quite taken up with the second air monster.

They held their breath as it came down from the upper currents to the lower, and some even cried out in alarm, believing those in it must be crushed in the fall.

A sand bag or two flew out.

The balloon remained stationary, hovering short distance above the earth like a great bird fluttering its wings over a stream while preparing to dart down upon an unlucky fish.

Bob noted one thing with secret exultation

The air had grown perceptibly cooler, and as the southerly breeze had died completely out, he was of the opinion a change was at hand.

Before long the air would be coming out of the northwest, and such a breeze must practically send them back over the course they had come.

All provided they were allowed to start.

What was to hinder?

Many things might come up to delay them—the Squire perhaps, had not yet exhausted his power for doing evil, and those in the other balloon had maintained a long chase with certain base designs in view, which possibly they would be loth to relinquish.

It was in this frame of mind that Bob reached the entrance to the fair grounds.

People were even crowding in—people who had gone home satisfied in the earlier part of the day, and since hearing of the wonderful things taking place, had come back again.

Bob left the rig in charge of the keepers in the grounds, and with his mother made his way in the direction of the campus.

A great crowd thronged it.

They evidently supposed the second balloon would also drop in the center of the race track, but Bob's experienced eye told him at a glance they would never make it.

Like a racing yacht being deserted by the wind when near the goal, the balloon hung aloft, yet the drift in the atmosphere was carrying it at right angles with the fair grounds.

They must drop down outside or go past.

He turned his attention to his own plant.

The balloon seemed to be as he left it.

Pete was there on guard.

In the basket of the balloon he saw Petite Barabara, looking a little concerned, for she knew who was in the car of the rival air monster hovering so near, and the continued absence of Bob worried her

Suddenly she caught a glimpse of her hero, pushing his way through the crowd.

"There he is, Pete—he's coming now. How glad I am," she cried, for her faith was great.

And Pete himself heaved a sigh of relief, for the crisis seemed imminent, and he hardly felt able to manage it without Bob's assistance.

Another minute and the girl felt arms about her—she looked up hastily and saw a lady's face close to her own, a face that aroused a wonderful emotion in her breast

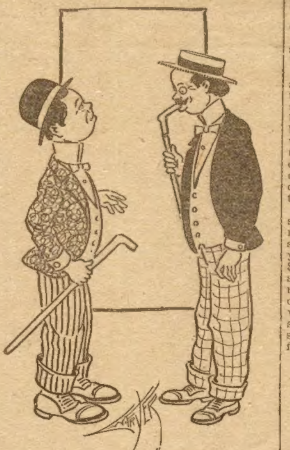
"Do not be frightened, dear child. You will know all very soon. I am the mother of him you call Bob, and I believe you are also my child."

Bob had immediately proceeded to business, and was diving among the contents of the various lockers in search of something.

"The bombs, Pete—we must get away before it is too late. Where did you put them quick—quick!"

This capital story of boyhood luck and adventure will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. It will be to your pleasure and profit to follow its characters to the dramatic and remarkable close. Would you like one of our fine stereoscopes without cost, or six of our fine summer patterns entirely free? Then subscribe for the Ledger and they will be sent to you. Read our premium announcement on pages thirteen and fifteen.

Runs in the Family.



Fritz—How did you learn to two-step?

Startz—Well, you see I have two step-sisters.

False Signal.

"You don't believe in romance, eh?" said the old boarder.

"You bet your tintype I don't," sighed the young man with the bandage around his head "I had my share."

"How was that?"

"Well, you see I was forbidden to call on my best girl and every night she would sit out on the balcony and at a certain hour strike a match. That would be the signal for me to stick my head through the vines and kiss her."

"Ah, very poetical."

"Yes, but the other night I saw the match flare up, stuck my head through the vines and got the worst thrashing I ever received. You see, the old man happened to be out there lighting his pipe"

The Missing Fifty-Three.

Rambling Waggles—I was robbed last night, and I reckon that about fifty-three articles were stolen from me. Everything I had in the world.

Policeman—Fifty-three articles?

Rambling Waggles—Yes; a pack of cards and a corkscrew.

The Damnation of Father Fitzgerald

(Continued from page seven.)

tive that the penurious old aunt and Edith Burke must be one and the same."

"Oh, Fabian, do you really think so? I have been anxious to know what you thought about this strange circumstance. I, too, believe that this woman must be Edith Burke, and that justice lies very near us. To think, Fabian, that only a few miles away sleeps the one upon whom all our happiness depends—that is, if your theories are correct. But I have been thinking, or rather fearing, that this Ed Brady might possibly be a cousin, after what the woman said. I am greatly mystified and wild to know the truth. It is so unfortunate that we cannot get on tonight."

"Yes, I am disappointed in that, Mercedes, still I suppose we can find her there in the morning just as well. You had better run in now, dear one," he concluded, fondly kissing her good night. "We must get an early start tomorrow—no doubt it will be an eventful day."

When Mercedes re-entered the underground room, she found the light turned very low and the old couple in bed. Hastily getting into a robe she crawled under the covers.

Some time later Fabian returned from the outside and took up his position for the night in a wooden rocker. The fire had quite died out and the room was chilly, so he wrapped his overcoat about him and settled himself to think about his plan of action for the following day. He must have sat thus for an hour or more when suddenly his thoughts were disturbed by a quiet whispering and he felt that the farmer and his wife had him under discussion. Finally the old man cleared his throat and said:

"Don't you think, stranger, you'd best be turnin' in? It disturbs my wife to have any one settin' up in the room so late and——"

"I beg your pardon, sir, I did not think of that. I am troubled somewhat with insomnia and my breathing, so often sit through the entire night dozing as I can in a chair. But if——"

"Well, one thing's certain, some one's got to suffer by your sittin' up or lyin' down, either me or you," snapped the wife, "so I reckon the better part of gallantry is for you to do the sufferin I couldn't sleep a wink with a body settin' up in the room.'

Mercedes had been wakened by the voices and was much distressed as she listened to the conversation.

"Indeed, you are right, madam," answered Fabian. "I yield the point. But there is plenty of hay in the stable so I'll go out there where I will not disturb any one with my restlessness.'

"Humph, you'd better go to bed and sleep like a sensible person, sir, and forgit all about your breathin' and your insomnia. It's likely nothin' but your imagination."

"I'll go to the barn so as not to disturb the rest of you," insisted Fabian. "I want to smoke, anyhow, and it will be quite a novelty to sleep in a barn once again on the hay as I did many a time when a boy."

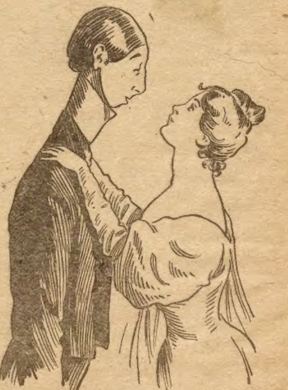
"You'll get awfully cold," called Mercedes as he started out.

"Don't mind me, I'll be all right," he answered cheerfully, as he closed the door behind him.

"I won't sleep a wink, either, thinking about his being in that old barn all night," thought Mercedes. "I know now what he meant by saying it was a mistake to have brought me along. I wonder if I hadn't better turn back in the morning. Still, if we find the one for whom we are looking tomorrow, then nothing stands in the way of our both returning at once. Then we can be married, and all the world will be ours. Dear Heaven, I beseech you, bring to us this happiness!"

The concluding chapters of this splendid story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscriptions, for many great stories will appear during the coming months. With every subscription we send entirely free of cost one of our splendid stereoscopes or any six of our standard patterns. See pages thirteen and fifteen.

From a Novel.



"She stood gazing into empty space."

Chapple—Haven't you something—aw—more suited to my head?

Salesman—Do you mean a soft hat, sir?

The Death-Key Mystery.

(Continued from page eleven.)

loved her. They had this lovely home in Florida. The citizens respected them. They were prosperous. But alas! the wife could not forget the key. It haunted her. It was no doubt when she was most blissfully happy that the cold, gliding touch of that iron key would seem to slip along her warm heart. Now you will tell me that all this is surmise—delusion—fancy—poetry.

"I grant you, Moore, that it is very good poetry. But it is also the truth, and I am going to prove—absolutely prove—that what has sounded fanciful to you is cold, cruel fact.

"Their child was born." Keeneyes paused.

Jansen Moore nervously dropped his rose. He stooped and felt for it along the carpet.

"Moore, did you notice its arm when we were in the room?"

"I—yes—it—but was that—" Moore trembled.

"Then you saw the birthmark?" persisted the detective.

Jansen Moore nodded. "I couldn't believe it," he muttered. "I thought I was getting somewhat unbalanced from the experiences of the night."

"What did that birthmark resemble?" demanded Keeneyes.

Jansen Moore did not answer.

At that moment the light was turned off.

"My God!" whispered the young man.

Keeneyes rose and drew aside the curtain. "Day is here," he said cheerily, "and I think it is going to be fine."

"I thought," muttered Moore, "that it was from our hearing her wild talk and seeing the oars crossed."

"No," said Keeneyes, "the birthmark is the image of that death-key—burned upon the child's flesh by the tortured conscience of the mother. Come, come, my friend, don't look so haggard and wild. All has turned out for the best. Do you not see there was no happiness in life for Winnie? As soon as the child was born she saw evidence of her guilt. She went mad, but still in her madness, her instinct was to hide her secret. Therefore she desired to kill her child because its birthmark told the story."

"It is terrible!" whispered the other, staring at the sky upon which the light of the dawning day was rapidly casting its glory.

"Yes, but better for her to die. No one will understand the meaning of that birthmark save the father. The daughter will live to comfort him. As for us, we will return tomorrow to Fenceville. And we will tell Mrs. Le Brune all she need know. When she learns that her uncle's slayer—his unintentional slayer—is dead, her demand for justice will be satisfied."

"Yes, let us hurry back to Fenceville," said Jansen Moore father cheerfully, and he went back to look for the rose. "And so this is the end of the mystery case!"

"Well, no," said Keeneyes slowly, "it is not all. You will remember that you and I made a little agreement at the beginning of this case——"

"Oh!" exclaimed Moore.

"A little agreement to test our skill. Now, my dear fellow, which of us has proved the better detective in this case? Confess. And remember that the one who is defeated must perform any act the successful rival demands of him."

"Yes, I remember, Mr. Zellers, but——"

"Come, come, Moore," said Keeneyes impatiently, "did I solve this Boliver Bering mystery case or did you?"

"You did, but——"

"Then you will confess that I am more skillful in solving mysteries than you?"

"Certainly; mysteries are not my fort, but——"

"I wish you would tell me what your fort is," said Keeneyes unkindly. "Now, my dear fellow, don't try to break that engagement, for I have an act to demand of you; namely to go to J. J. James——"

Jansen Moore muttered something disrespectful of J. J. James, and said, "Just wait, please. It is true we set out to find which of us was the better reader of mysteries."

"Well?" snapped Keeneyes.

"Well," cried Jansen Moore, "if it hadn't been for me you'd be a dead detective, that's what you'd be!"

For a while Keeneyes said nothing.

Presently he spoke slowly. "Moore, if you'll never again refer to that little incident in my hearing—I suppose you won't be able to keep from bragging about it behind my back—I'll change what I was to ask, and to compromise, will merely suggest something for you to do, you having full and honorable liberty to turn down the proposition if it doesn't suit your inclinations."

"Why!" cried Jansen Moore, "I like an order like that first rate. So give me the order and I'll tell you on the spot whether I'll carry it out or not."

"My order," said Keeneyes gravely, "is to go to Fenceville and marry Sopha Le Brune."

CHAPTER XIX.

Three months later Richard Zellers received the following note from Jansen Moore:

"On Thursday, August 10th, I shall be happy to carry out your order. Both of us would be delighted to have you present. You may come as Keeneyes, for I am fast getting back my mustache, and am to all the world, and in particular to you,

"Very sincerely,
"JANSEN MOORE."

(The end.)

The Way He Should Go.

I was in northern Wisconsin looking after a lumber interest and had to solicit lodging with a settler. He hadn't much room to spare and not much to eat, and when through with supper we lighted our pipes and had a smoke and a talk. He had only one child and he was a boy of 15. He sat in the chimney corner for an hour and never said a word, and finally the father remarked:

"Well, Jim, it's time you had your lesson and went to bed. Come up here."

The boy advanced and stood before him and the father opened on him as if terribly indignant. He called him a loafer, a liar, a robber, a swindler and 40 other things. He threatened to knock his teeth out—to bat his eyes, to knock his eyebrows off and, finally to break every bone in his body. To my surprise, the boy stood and took it as if he had heard the same things every day for a month, and when the father had ended he began. He went over the same ground, repeated every word and shaking his fist and throwing his arms about, and finally finished and said good night and went to bed.

"May I inquire what sort of a performance I have just witnessed?" I asked of the settler.

"Certainly, stranger," he replied. "There's 1,000,000 acres of Government land around me here. In the last 10 years I have stolen and marketed $10,000 worth of it. Now and then a Government inspector has come along and tried to stop me, but I've run him off talking to him as I just talked to Jim. Jim is growing up and will be big enough to steal timber in a couple of years more. I want him to learn how to talk, so as to hold his own. Lord, but you didn't think I was going to make a preacher of him, did you? Not any, sir. Timber stealin' beats 40 preachers all holler, but you've got to be provided with a heap of cuss words and bluff to make a go of it."

No Longer a Gentleman.

"The members of a football team were in my car going to another city to play," said a sleeping car conductor. They had to ride half the night, and so they took the sleeper. One youth had 80 cents to spend, and when he went to bed he decided to hide that money so nobody would find it. When no one was looking he slipped it into the toe of one of his shoes. Then he put the shoes under the berth and went to sleep to dream of his fortune below.

"Well, along in the night the porter came in and began his work of shining shoes. He found the jay's shoes with the 80 cents in it and you ought to have seen him smile. 'Dis man am suttinly a gentleman,' he said. 'Jes' think—leavin' me 80 cents jes' fo' blackin' his shoes.'

"The next morning when the player found his 80 cents gone he almost had a fit. He made the porter give him back his money. The porter was mad. He came to me and said:

" 'Say, boss, you know that feller Ah said was a gentleman fo' leavin' me 80 cents fo' blackin' his shoes?'

" 'Yes,' I replied.

" 'Well, he ain't no gentleman—he's a jay. He was usin' dat shoe as a bank.' "

Didn't Know Which Got Hit.

An Irishman, passing along the street one day, was hit on the head by a brick which had dropped from a new building. Thinking he had cause for complaint and damages, he consulted a lawyer, who advised bringing suit. The case came before the proper authorities, and the man was awarded $50 damages. Wishing to settle with the lawyer who had conducted the case, he asked for his bill.

"Well, I think $50 will be about right," said the lawyer.

The money was paid. After a while, observing that the Irishman was evidently puzzling over some knotty question, he asked what was the trouble.

"Begorra!" replied the Irishman, "I was just wondering who got hit—you or I."—Judge.

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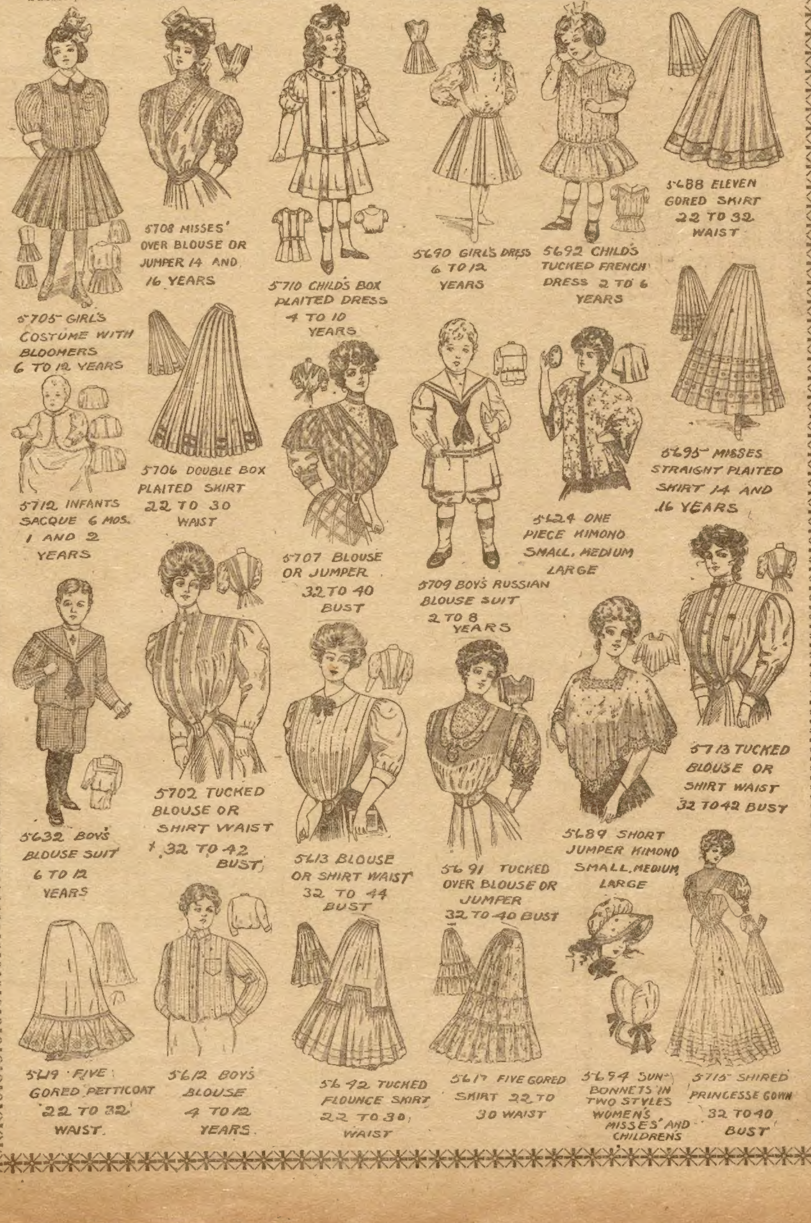
5705 GIRL'S COSTUME WITH BLOOMERS 6 TO 12 YEARS
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5692 CHILD'S TUCKED FRENCH DRESS 2 TO 6 YEARS
5688 ELEVEN GORED SKIRT 22 TO 32 WAIST
5712 INFANTS SACQUE 6 MOS. 1 AND 2 YEARS
5706 DOUBLE BOX PLAITED SKIRT 22 TO 30 WAIST
5707 BLOUSE OR JUMPER 32 TO 40 BUST
5709 BOY'S RUSSIAN BLOUSE SUIT 2 TO 8 YEARS
5624 ONE PIECE KIMONO SMALL, MEDIUM LARGE
5695 MISSES STRAIGHT PLAITED SKIRT 14 AND 16 YEARS
5632 BOY'S BLOUSE SUIT 6 TO 12 YEARS
5702 TUCKED BLOUSE OR SHIRT WAIST 32 TO 42 BUST
5613 BLOUSE OR SHIRT WAIST 32 TO 44 BUST
5691 TUCKED OVER BLOUSE OR JUMPER 32 TO 40 BUST
5689 SHORT JUMPER KIMONO SMALL, MEDIUM LARGE
5713 TUCKED BLOUSE OR SHIRT WAIST 32 TO 42 BUST
5619 FIVE GORED PETTICOAT 22 TO 32 WAIST
5612 BOYS BLOUSE 4 TO 12 YEARS
5692 TUCKED FLOUNCE SKIRT 22 TO 30 WAIST
5617 FIVE GORED SKIRT 22 TO 30 WAIST
5694 SUN-BONNETS IN TWO STYLES WOMENS MISSES' AND CHILDRENS
5715 SHIRRED PRINCESSE GOWN 32 TO 40 BUST

FOR YOUTHFUL EYES

PUT-OFF TOWN.

Did you ever go to Put-Off Town,
Where the houses are old and tumble-down,
And everything tarries, and everything drags,
With dirty streets and people in rags?

On the street of Slow lives Old Man Wait,
And his two little boys named Linger and Late,
With unclean hands and tousled hair,
And a naughty little sister named Don't Care.

Grandmother Growl lives in this town,
With her two little daughters called Fret and Frown;
And Old Man Lazy lives all alone,
Around the corner, on Street Postpone.

Did you ever go to Put-Off Town
To play with the little girls, Fret and Frown;
Or go to the home of Old Man Wait,
And whistle for his boys to come to the gate—

To play all day in Tardy Street,
Leaving your errands for other feet?
To stop, or shirk, or linger, or frown,
Is the nearest way to this old town.

Swiss Laws for Boys.

In some of the cantons of Switzerland they have special laws made for boys. Here is a sample of them:

"If a boy throw a stone and hit a man he may be fined three francs.

"If a boy throw a snowball and hit a woman he may be fined two francs.

"If a boy call a girl a 'red-head' he may be fined from two to four francs.

"If a boy throw at frogs in a pond without being ordered to by his father or teacher, he shall be fined one franc.

"If a boy threw a stone and break a window belonging to some one else, his father may whip him or he may be fined two francs.

"If a boy make a face at his teacher, or draw pictures of him on his slate, or speak ill of him, he may be fined five francs and have to beg his pardon.

"If a boy stone a dog or chase a cat it is a fine of one franc.

"If two boys fight without the consent of their teacher it is a fine of three francs.

"If a boy steals apples or other fruit it is a fine of two francs and he should be beaten by his father."

The American boy who reads the above will wonder what the Swiss boy has to live for. About all he can do and not be fined is to have the measles or whooping cough.

Dolls Made From Potatoes.

Did you ever try to make dolls out of potatoes? It is really both possible and quite amusing to fashion fair doll-babies from these everyday and it will prove an interesting game for a children's party. Give every guest a well-scrubbed and slender potato, four small wire hairpins, four small beaded tacks, two gayly-bordered paper napkins, and a whole strip of pins; then start everybody going and offer prizes for the prettiest, the funniest and the ugliest dolls; all of the work to be done by a certain hour. Incidentally, be sure to provide as many pairs of scissors as possible, for these will be needed every moment.

The hairpins are to be thrust into the potato so as to stimulate arms and legs, the tacks are to be used for the eyes, the nose and the mouth, while the napkins may be cut up and folded into gorgeous costumes, the garments being carefully pinned into position. The results will really astonish you, for there are great possibilities in these simple materials.

A Floral Scrap.

"Did you hear of all the trouble in the flower circus?" asked a writer in the Washington Herald.

"No; what was it?"

"Well, to begin with, the tiger lilies boasted of the superiority of their tricks over the dandy-lions, and these cat-tales were brought to the elephant's ears, and it was very natural that the Dogwood tell them where the Cow's-lips would repeat them. That Fox-Glove was on hand, although the Cock's Comb gossip was ahead. Then everybody was inclined to linger to admire the Parrot's feather, till they heard the Cro-cuss like a trooper, and all hands got a fatherly lecture from the Poppy flower."

Rat as Workman.

The ivory dealer pointed to a half dozen rats gnawing among the yellow heaps of tusks and ivory fragments in the garret.

"They are quite tame, you see," he said to a New Orleans Times-Democrat writer. "Why shouldn't they be so? The fact is, they are on my pay roll. They work for me. Their wages are a pound of cheese and a loaf of bread a week.

"Ivory dealers like rats, for rats are ivory's best judges, and without their help we should often want a higher price for a bad tusk than for a fine one."

He took a fragment of ivory from the floor and pointed to certain small furrows in its surface.

"The rats did that," he said. "Those furrows are a proof of the ivory's excellence. Rats gnaw the ivory that contains animal glue, or gelatine, a substance of which they are very fond. And this substance it is that makes ivory excellent, yet a mere man can't tell whether a tusk contains it or not.

"The rats can tell. They are ivory experts, and they work so cheap—why don't they form a union?"

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Berries Without Cream.

A benevolent old man invited a number of poor boys to a treat in his beautiful grounds one day last summer. Among the many good things that he provided for them were strawberries and cream. Seeing that the boys enjoyed these very much, he thought he would point a lesson.

"Well, boys," he said, "I hope you have enjoyed your strawberries and cream."

"Yes, sir," was the answer in a loud chorus.

"But suppose," he continued, "that instead of having been invited here, you had stolen over my garden wall and helped yourselves when no one was looking, you would not have enjoyed them half so much, would you?"

"No, sir," answered the chorus.

"And why not?"

To this there was no immediate response; but at length one small boy, rather bolder than the rest, piped out:

"'Cause we wouldn't have had no cream with 'em."

Guess What.

If Dick's father be John's son, what relation is Dick to John? His grandson.

If all the money in the world was divided equally among the people what would each one get? An equal share.

Why is a young lady like a sheaf of wheat? First she is cradled, then thrashed, and finally she becomes the flower of the family.

Why is an engraver fearless of drowning? Because he is accustomed to die sinking.

What lesson of life can the small boy learn from the fire engine? It must work or it can't play.

Who is it that always has a number of movements on foot for making money? A dancing master.

Bees Faster Than Pigeons.

It is not generally known that bees are swifter in flight than pigeons—that is, for short distances. Some years ago a pigeon fancier of Hamme, Westphalia, laid a wager that a dozen bees liberated three miles from their hives would reach home in less time than a dozen pigeons. The competitors were given wing at Rybern, a village nearly a league from Hamme, and the first bee reached the hive a quarter of a minute in advance of the first pigeon. Three other bees reached the goal before the second pigeon. The bees were also slightly handicapped, having been rolled in flour before starting for purpose of identification.

Not Time for Him.

The children in the Sunday school class were getting restless, and the minister to divert them, asked all who wished to go to Heaven to stand up. The whole school rose, except one little boy.

"Don't you want to go to Heaven, my little lad?" asked the minister.

"Yes, sir,' was the response, "but I know mother doesn't want me to go just yet."

Explained.

"Why, Howard, child, now did you cut your lip that way?" cried Mrs. B.

"Playing,' said Howard. 'I was playing I was a goat, an' I tried to eat a tomatter can.'

A Reason.

"Well, Willie, which do you like the best, Sunday or your everyday school?"

"Sunday school,' said Willie. "'Coz you only have to go once a week."

BUTTON BATTLE.

"Now Dorothy must dress herself,"
  Said mamma one day;
"A little girl has more to do
  Than just to run and play."
And Dorothy was very proud
  To hear mamma declare,
She thought her even old enough
  To brush and comb her hair.

So joyfully she set to work
  One morning bright and fair,
Forgetting that with buttons she
  Was fastened everywhere.
To right—to left—before—behind—
  They stood in grim array,
What seemed so easy with a nurse,
  Was hard the other way.

Poor Dorothy! She was distressed.
  What shall I do?" she cried.
"My buttons won't go through their holes
  Although I've tried and tried,
My thumbs are sore, my fingers ache,
  My arms are far too short
To catch the buttons in the back,
  As Nursey says I ought.

"If I were only Martha Jane,
  How easy it would be!
But then of course one can't stick pins
  in flesh and blood like me.
I think, mamma——" here Dorothy
  Quite slowly shook her head.
"If nurse can't put those buttons through,
  I'd rather stay in bed."

Only a Little Slit Left.

Mrs. Lucia Ames Mead, of Boston, aroused a good deal of comment with her recent declaration that tin soldiers had a bad effect on children, inciting in them a love for war, says the Washington Post.

Mrs. Mead, an engaging author and a noted lecturer, was well qualified to speak on this matter, for she has for a number of years studied carefully and intelligently the child mind.

In the course of investigations she has come upon many quaint instances of the peculiar reasoning of children. The other day she said:

"I once told a little girl that folks claimed the moon was inhabited. The child sneered.

"'Rubbish, she said. 'It can't be. What would the people up there do when there was only a little slit left?'"

Some Natural History.

F. A. Whitney, of Meeteetsee, Wyo., a rich rancher, is greatly interested in all charities that help children, says the New York Tribune. In a recent visit East he told a story about a little slum urchin whom he had sent on a month's vacation into the country.

"The lad was so ignorant," he said, "that he thought we got mush from the mushrooms and milk from the milkweed. One morning a woman pointed to a horse in a field and said:

"'Look at the horse, Jimmy.'

"'That's a cow,' the boy contradicted.

"'No,' said the lady, 'it's a horse.

"'Tain't. It's a cow,' said the boy, 'Horses has wagons to 'em.'"

Warlike Finery.

Harry became much interested in playing soldier, but the trappings he collected gradually, relates Harper's Magazine. At first he was content to march about merely with a stick for a gun; then at his request his mother made him a paper hat, to which later she added a "plume," which Harry had discovered in the henyard. For a time he was highly pleased with this outfit, but after a day he must needs have a belt, and this naturally led him to ask his father to whittle him a sword. At last, bedecked in this warrior dress, Harry again confronted his mother.

"Why, how like a soldier you look!" she observed.

"Yes—but, mamma,' he hinted, "I've been looking at a picture of Napoleon, and he has a scrubbing brush on each shoulder."

Probably.

Papa—I wonder why it is that when we drop a slice of bread it usually falls with the buttered side down?

His Little Boy—I guess it's for the same reason that when we fall in winter time we wonder why the ice freezes with the slippery side up.

COMPLETE SELF-INSTRUCTOR

GIVEN AWAY

Valuable Musical Instruments. You can have your choice of any one of our **fine** instruments, **Violin, Guitar, Mandolin, Banjo, etc.** Our instruments are full size and **perfect in tone.** They are not toys but valuable satisfying instruments. Our **Solo Guitars** for instance are made especially for us, finished in a rich cherry. All we ask you to do is to dispose of 16 of our beautiful multicolored art pictures at 25 cents each. These pictures are reproductions from famous masterpieces worth many times the price we ask. We are a thoroughly reliable honest Company. We do exactly as we agree. Send no money. We trust you with the pictures. When sold send us the $4.00 and your choice of our beautiful instruments will be sent at once.

American Pub Co.,
67B First Ave.,
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N. J.

BETTY BOTTER.

Betty Botter bought some butter;
"But," she said, "this butter's bitter.
If I put it in my batter,
It will make my batter bitter;
But a bit of better butter
Will but make my batter better."
So she bought a bit of butter,
Better than the bitter butter,
And made her bitter batter better,
So 'twas better Betty Botter
Bought a bit of better butter.

Shoot Arrows Sidewise.

Eskimo and Indians and other savage tribes that are skilled in the use of the bow and arrow can shoot an arrow so it will go sidewise. This is their way of shooting when trying to hit a descending arrow or one sticking upright in the ground.

Reason for the Sign.

"What's the use in having that sign?" asked Philip, pointing to a door in a public place on which was the sign, "This door is closed."

"Why, I guess it's put there for the benefit of blind people, who can't see that the door is closed," replied Elsie.

The Real Thing.

A lot of poor children were at a farm. The farmer gave them some milk to drink, the product of a prize cow.

"How do you like it?" he asked, when they had finished.

"Gee, it's fine!" said one little fellow, who added, after a thoughtful pause, "I wish our milkman kept a cow!"

A Curious Needle

A former King of Prussia one day visited a needle manufactory in his dominions to see what machinery, aided by the human hand, could produce. He saw a number of needles, called superfine, thousands of which put together did not weigh half an ounce, and expressed his astonishment that such minute objects could be pierced with an eye. At this the borer—the workman whose business it is to bore the eyes in the needles—asked for a hair from the King's head. It was readily given, when the workman placed it under the boring machine, made a hole in it with the greatest care, furnished it with a thread, and then handed the singular needle to the King.